From Craving to Liberation – Excursions into the Thought-world of the Pāli Discourses (1)

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Introduction 3

1. Craving / *Taṇhā*
1.1 Craving imagery 5
1.2 Types of Craving 11
1.3 The Arising of Craving 19
1.4 The Cessation of Craving 23
1.5 The Path to Freedom from Craving 24

2. Passion / *Rāga*
2.1 The Nature of Passion 29
2.2 The Removal of Passion 34
2.3 Passion and Dispassion 36

3. Ill-will / *Vyāpāda*
3.1 Manifestations of Ill-will 44
3.2 The Arising and Consequences of Ill-will 50
3.3 How to Overcome Ill-will 52

4. Sloth-and-torpor / *Thīnamiddha*
4.1 The Nature of Sloth-and-torpor 57
4.2 The Removal of Sloth-and-torpor 59

5. Restless-and-worry / *Uddhaccakukkuca*
5.1 Restlessness 63
5.2 Worry 66
5.3 Restlessness-and-worry 67

6. Doubt / *Vicikicchā*
6.1 The Nature of Doubt 70
6.2 Doubt and Investigation 72

7. Feeling / *Vedanā*
7.1 The Nature of Feelings 77
7.2 Bodily and Mental Feelings 81
7.3 Feelings and Karmic Retribution 84
7.4 Feelings and Views 86

8. Contemplation of Feelings / *Vedanānupassanā*
8.1 The Analysis of Feelings 89
8.2 Feelings and Mental Reactions 91
8.3 The Potential of Contemplating Feelings 94
8.4 Feelings and Impermanence 95
8.5 The Significance of *Dukkha* 97

9. Happiness / *Sukha*
9.1 Types of Happiness 100
9.2 The Ethical Perspective on Happiness 102
9.3 Happiness and the Development of the Mind 106

10. Equanimity / *Upekkhā*
10.1 Equanimity towards Sensory Experience 112
10.2 Equanimity as a Divine Abode 114
10.3 Equanimity as a Factor of Awakening 118

11. Knowledge and Vision according to Reality / *Yathābhūtañāṇadassana*
11.1 The Implications of *Yathābhūta* 124
11.2 Knowledge and Vision 126
11.3 The Buddha's Awakening 127
11.4 The Development of *Yathābhūtañāṇadassana* 131

12. Liberation / *Vimutti*
12.1 The Eight Deliverances 141
12.2 Liberation of the Mind 148
12.3 Occasions for Attaining Liberation 156
12.4 Liberated Beings 159
12.5 The Path to Liberation 163

Abbreviations 169

Bibliography 170

Index 172

Introduction

The essays collected in the present book are revised versions of entries originally published in the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, Sri Lanka. My main emphasis in each case is on exploring a particular term from the perspective of the early Pāli discourses, while other sources − be these later Pāli works, Chinese parallels, or secondary publications on the matter at hand − are taken into consideration only in a supplementary fashion.

The first part of the present book deals mainly with factors or states of mind that are detrimental and need to be overcome, the middle section turns to the development of insight, while the last part takes up themes related to the goal of such development.

Thus the selection begins by examining "craving" and "passion" as root defilements of the mind that need to be understood and overcome. Given that passion is quite similar to sensual desire, the first in the standard listing of the five hindrances, the selection skips this term and directly turns to the remaining four hindrances of "ill-will", "sloth-and-torpor", "restlessness-and-worry" and "doubt".

According to the standard exposition of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*, craving arises in dependence on feelings, hence insight needs to be developed in regard to feelings as one of the chief aspects of human experience. The second part of the present selection takes this into account by exploring the significance of "feelings" and the implications of "contemplation of feelings". This is followed by a survey of "happiness" and "equanimity", both being aspects of feelings and at the same time terms whose significance goes beyond feelings, since both are also fruits of successful insight practice, the topic of the final part of the present book.

The remaining themes taken up in this final part are "knowledge and vision according to reality" − the purpose of the development of insight − and the conception of "liberation" in the Pāli discourses, which covers accomplishment in the realm of tranquillity as well as of insight.

While I have tried to arrange the above topics in a meaningful manner, the essays in the present book were originally written as independent contributions. They do not necessarily build on each other and thus can be read in whatever sequence the reader may prefer.

When revising the original Encyclopaedia articles, I have tried to adapt my presentation to the general readership. Thus I dispense with footnoting and use round brackets to provide references, intending with this procedure to make it easier for the reader to jump over information that may not be of immediate interest. In general terms I hope that, without sacrificing academic rigour, I am able to present material of practical interest for those who approach Buddhism as a system of mental development.

To conclude this introduction, I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have helped by commenting on this collection in its draft stages, to the editor of the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism for giving me copyright permission, and to Bhikkhu Bodhi for having laid the foundation to all my writings through his kind tuition. Needless to say, I am solely responsible for any remaining errors.

1. Craving / *Taṇhā*

According to the early Buddhist analysis of existence, craving or *taṇhā* is the very root cause of the *saṃsāric* predicament, being the central factor responsible for the arising of *dukkha*, as highlighted in the second noble truth. Due to its pivotal role as the chief cause of bondage, *taṇhā* features in numerous passages and contexts in the early discourses, and forms the topic of an entire chapter in the *Dhammapada* (Dhp 334 - 359).

In the present essay, I will first of all explore the nature of *taṇhā* with the help of a number of similes from the Pāli discourses, which bring out various aspects of *taṇhā* (1.1). Next I will survey different types of craving and examine in some detail the conception of craving for non-existence, *vibhavataṇhā* (1.2). Having explored the nature of craving, I will continue by examining the arising of craving (1.3), the implications of its cessation (1.4), and the steps to be undertaken in order to arrive at freedom from *taṇhā* (1.5).

1.1 Craving Imagery

The term *taṇhā* literally stands for "thirst", a meaning echoed also in its near synonym *tasiṇā*. *Taṇhā* − as a figurative type of thirst that demands the satisfaction of desires − manifests as a sense of lack or want, and has its root in dissatisfaction. Various aspects of craving are reflected in the use of a range of imageries and similes in the discourses.

One such image speaks of being enmeshed by craving, of being caught in the net of craving. This image occurs in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* that examines one-hundred-and-eight manifestations of craving (AN II 211-213). The discourse begins by distinguishing eighteen forms of internal craving and eighteen forms of external craving. The internal manifestations of craving are various modes of imagination that begin with the basic notion "I am", which then leads to imaginations of the type "I am like this", "should I be otherwise?", "may I become like this", etc. Their external counterparts come into being when this same notion "I am" is related to the external world, as for example in the form "by this I am", etc. Adding these two modes together, and relating them to the past, the present and the future, results in one-hundred-and-eight ways of bondage, which according to this *Aṅguttara-nikāya* discourse equals being enmeshed by craving, *taṇhā-jālinā*.

The relation provided in the above *Aṅguttara-nikāya* discourse between the net of craving and the issue of self notions recurs in the *Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta*. This discourse points out that the monk Sāti, who stubbornly held on to the erroneous view that the same consciousness transmigrates in *saṃsāra*, was caught in the great net of craving, *mahātaṇhā-jāla* (MN I 271). The relation between craving and views in general comes to light in a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, according to which speculative views about the future destiny of a Tathāgata after death are simply a product of delighting in craving, *taṇhā-rāma*, of enjoying and rejoicing in craving, *taṇhā-rata taṇhā-samudita* (SN IV 390).

The net imagery recurs in relation to craving in general in a verse in the *Theragāthā*, which compares the condition of one who has destroyed the net of craving, *taṇhā-jāla*, to the stain-

less moon on a clear night (Th 306). The *Dhammapada* also employs this imagery, when it contrasts the net-like nature of craving to the freedom attained by the Buddha who, in contrast to such forms of entrapment, has a limitless range, *ananta-gocara* (Dhp 180).

The aspect of craving as a form of bondage, *bandhana* (SN I 8), which underlies the net imagery, recurs also in other similes. Overcome by craving, *tasiṇā*, beings run around in circles comparable to a rabbit caught in a snare (Dhp 342). Covered by craving's cloak, *taṇhā-chadana-chāditā*, they are in bondage like a fish in a trap (Ud 76).

The idea of bondage or binding together also underlies a simile that presents craving as a seamstress, *taṇhā sibbanī*. This seamstress sews together contact, its arising and cessation; or else it sews together past, future and present; or else pleasure, pain, and neither-pleasure-nor-pain; or else name, form and consciousness; or else sense-organs, sense-objects and consciousness; or else personality, its arising and its cessation (AN III 399 - 402, commenting on Sn 1042). Whichever of these complementary perspectives is taken on the seamstress of craving, its result is the continuity of becoming, *bhava*, and hence the continuity of *dukkha*.

This sticky craving, *taṇhā visattikā* (Dhp 335), is a yoke that binds beings to existence, *taṇhā-yoga* (It 50). It causes beings to take up the burden of the five aggregates, *taṇhā vuccati bhārādānaṃ* (SN III 26); in fact it is responsible for the very arising and existence of a being, *satta* (SN III 190). At death, such a being will be carried on to its next rebirth based on craving, *taṇhupādāna,* like a flame carried on by the wind (SN IV 400). That is, from the perspective of faring on in *saṃsāra*, craving is the fetter par excellence, *taṇhā-saṃyojana* (It 8).

Another set of images revolves around the theme of growth in nature. These images alert us to the danger of allowing craving to follow its natural course, thereby becoming forever stronger. This aspect can be seen in a *Dhammapada* verse that compares the fertility of the underlying tendency to craving, *taṇhānusaya*, to a tree that grows again after being cut down. Similarly, as long as its roots are left intact, craving will grow again (Dhp 338). Hence craving together with its root need to be removed (SN I 16).

The idea of growth recurs also in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, according to which craving is the moisture, *taṇhā sineho*, due to which the seed of consciousness grows in the field of karma (AN I 223). Craving is like a creeper, *taṇhā-lata* (Th 1094), that needs to be cut in order to reach liberation. A verse in the *Dhammapada* takes up the same image, pointing out that in the case of those who are heedless, craving will grow like a creeper, *māluvā viya* (Dhp 334). As a result, the same verse explains, beings proceed from one life to another, comparable to a monkey that leaps from tree to tree in search of fruit.

The simile of the monkey that leaps from tree to tree provides a convenient lead over to the idea of faring on endlessly, an idea that comes to the fore in another set of images that relate craving to a stream. There is no stream like craving, *n' atthi taṇhāsamā nadī,* warns a verse in the *Dhammapada* (Dhp 251). Another passage points out that those who are under the power of craving are carried along by the stream, *taṇhādhipannā anusota-gāmino* (AN II 6). Hence the task is to completely cut off craving just like drying up a fast flowing river (Sn 3). By thorough comprehension of craving the flood will be crossed (Sn 1082), and one who has completely eradicated craving, an *arahant*, is one who has cut the stream, *chinna-soto* (SN IV 292).

A more detailed treatment of the stream imagery can be found in a discourse in the *Itivuttaka* (It 113 - 115). This discourse describes a man who allows himself to be carried along by a pleasant stream. An onlooker from the bank of that river warns the man that soon this river will lead to a pool with whirlpools and dangerous beings. Encountering these dangers, the man carried along by the river will suffer death or meet with suffering similar to death. This image draws out the treacherous nature of the stream of craving and sounds a stern warning against succumbing to its all too powerful pull. The whole world, in fact, is being led here and there by this powerful pull of craving, *taṇhāya nīyati loko* (SN I 39). The helpless predicament that results from falling prey to craving is highlighted again in another simile, which compares beings under the influence of craving for existence, *taṇhā-gataṃ bhavesu*, to fish wriggling in water that is about to dry up (Sn 776-777).

The danger inherent in succumbing to craving, to which this simile alerts, becomes even more conspicuous in another set of similes that compare craving to a dart or an arrow. The world is afflicted by this dart of craving, *taṇhā-sallena otiṇṇo* (SN I 40), always burning with desires. The same image also recurs in several verses in the *Theragāthā*, where monks formulate the strong determination that they will neither take food nor leave their hut (Th 223 and 313), or even sit down at all (Th 514), until the dart of craving has finally been removed.

The *Sunakkhatta-sutta* provides additional background to the dart imagery (MN II 260), explaining that the dart of craving is smeared with the poison of ignorance and has hit the wound of the six internal sense-bases. The surgeon who pulls out the dart of craving from this wound is the Tathāgata, and to remove this dart requires mindfulness as the probe and noble wisdom as the knife. The Buddha as the good physician who teaches

the path to freedom from craving is therefore called the destroyer of the dart of craving, *taṇhā-sallassa hantāra* (SN I 192). A complementary image, also taken from the realm of physical affliction, presents craving as the tumour's root, *gaṇḍa-mūla* (SN IV 83), that needs to be removed in order to arrive at a state of mental health.

A discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* indicates that even if a monk should be living in remote places, far removed from contact with others, as long as this monk has not removed craving, he cannot really be reckoned as one who dwells in solitude. The reason is that he has craving as his second, that is, as his companion (SN IV 36).

The same discourse thus introduces yet another image related to craving: that of one's second, one's ever-present companion, *taṇhā dutiyo puriso* (Sn 740). This image brings out the ever-present deep seated feeling of dissatisfaction engendered by craving, a wanting so ingrained in one's habitual experience of the world that it is almost taken for granted. In fact, according to another passage *taṇhā* can be appropriated as a self, *'taṇhā attā 'ti* (MN III 284). That is, craving is so well entrenched in experience that it has become part of one's sense of identity. This makes the removal of craving all the more difficult, since to reach freedom from craving not only requires developing the insight that craving is inexorably bound up with dissatisfaction and frustration, but also requires giving up part of what is experienced as "I" and "mine".

This ever present companion is quite powerful and often enough takes the leading role, so much so that, with craving as one's second, one easily becomes a slave to craving, *taṇhā-dāsa*. The implications of being a slave to craving are drawn out in the *Raṭṭhapāla-sutta* (MN II 71). According to this discourse, King Koravya was puzzled by the fact that the young

and healthy Raṭṭhapāla, son of the wealthiest house in town, had decided to leave all possessions and relatives behind in order to go forth as a Buddhist monk. When explaining to the king what had motivated him, Raṭṭhapāla referred to the image of being a slave to craving, *taṇhā-dāso*.

Asked by the king to draw out the implications of this image, Raṭṭhapāla inquired what the king would do if he heard that among the neighbouring territories to the east a land could be found full of riches and easy to conquer. The king replied that he would certainly conquer it. Raṭṭhapāla kept on asking the same question for territories found in the other directions, including territories found far beyond the sea. In each case the king had to admit that he would wish to conquer them. In this way, Raṭṭhapāla was able to bring home to the king the insatiability of his thirst for power, a mode of craving suitably drawn from the king's own field of experience. Paradoxically enough, the very craving for more power turns the king into a slave, a slave of craving.

As the example provided in the *Raṭṭhapāla-sutta* shows, the arising of craving can take place quite independent of any real need, since even the king of the country, in spite of being more powerful than anyone else in his kingdom, will never be satisfied with his dominion, always ready to exert himself in order to further extend his domain.

1.2 Types of Craving

The standard exposition of the second noble truth differentiates between sensual craving, *kāma-taṇhā*, craving for existence, *bhava-taṇhā*, and craving for non-existence, *vibhava-taṇhā* (e.g. SN V 421). The first of these, sensual craving, could manifest in relation to any of the six senses, resulting in six modes of craving according to each sense-object. These are

the six *taṇhā-kāyā*, which comprise *rūpa-taṇhā, sadda-taṇhā, gandha-taṇhā, rasa-taṇhā, phoṭṭhabba-taṇhā,* and *dhamma-taṇhā* (e.g. DN III 244). Craving for existence could be for material or immaterial forms of existence, resulting in *rūpa-taṇhā* and *arūpa-taṇhā*, which the *Saṅgīti-sutta* lists together with *nirodha-taṇhā*, "craving for cessation"(DN III 216).

The *Saṅgīti-sutta* also presents a set of four types of craving more specifically related to the life of a monk or a nun, the *cattāro taṇhuppādā*, which comprise craving related to robes, to food, to lodging and to forms of existence (DN III 228). The first three of these four recur in a verse in the *Sutta-nipāta* (Sn 339).

In addition, craving could also be related to views, *diṭṭhi-taṇhā* (AN II 12), to the four nutriments (SN II 101), to wealth (Dhp 355), or to appropriating in general, *ādāna-taṇhā* (Sn 1103).

Of the three types of craving mentioned in the second noble truth, a particularly intriguing concept is that of craving for "non-existence" or "non-becoming", *vibhava*. In order to ascertain the implications of this type of craving, I will at first survey the term *vibhava* on its own, after which I will turn to *vibhava-taṇhā*

Vibhava occurs regularly in the early discourses together with such synonyms as "annihilation", *uccheda*, and "destruction", *vināsa*. A view that propounds future non-existence, *vibhava-diṭṭhi*, is an extreme that has its counterpart in views that propose external existence. Those who uphold either of these two types of views are at odds with each other and, being under the influence of craving and clinging, will be unable to reach liberation (MN I 65). Caught up in these two types of views, mankind either lags behind or else overshoots the goal (It 43). Upholding *vibhava-diṭṭhi* overshoots the goal, as out of

disgust with existence one develops delight in the notion of non-existence, perceiving the cessation of the self at death as peaceful and sublime.

A stark instance of annihilationist types of view that propound future non-existence would be the stance that according to the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* was taken by Ajita Kesakambalī (DN I 55). The position attributed to him holds that a human being merely consists of the four elements. When someone passes away, all that happens is that the body will be carried to the cremation ground, the bones will turn white and all offerings turn into ashes. To assume some form of survival after death is, according to this doctrine, merely empty prattle, as fools and wise alike will be annihilated at death and perish entirely. As the *Sandaka-sutta* points out, to uphold such a doctrine renders the living of a life dedicated to spiritual progress meaningless (MN I 515).

The situation of those who uphold annihilationism is quite vividly depicted in the *Pañcattaya-sutta*, which compares their predicament to a dog that is bound to a pillar and keeps running in circles around this pillar (MN II 232). The point of this image is that, in spite of being motivated by disenchantment with personal existence, *sakkāya*, annihilationism is unable to go beyond the inherent sense of identity. Instead, the annihilationists keep on running, as it were, in circles around the same personal existence they try to abandon. In whatever way such Brahmins and recluses may proclaim *vibhava* to be the escape from *bhava*, they will be unable to escape from existence (Ud 33). Only by leaving behind concern with *vibhava* and with *bhava* can future becoming be transcended, *vibhavañca bhavañca vippahāya ... khīnapunabbhavo* (Sn 514).

The decisive shift of perspective that is required to really transcend becoming can better be appreciated after taking a

closer look at an aspiration that a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* presents as the expression of an annihilationist view, *uccheda-diṭṭhi* (SN III 99). This aspiration reads: "may I not be, may it not be for me, I shall not be and it will not be for me", *no c' assaṃ, no ca me siyā, na bhavissāmi, na me bhavissati*. The *Saṃyutta-nikāya* discourse points out that this aspiration is rooted in ignorance and an expression of craving.

A discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, however, reckons this type of aspiration as the supreme among heterodox views, *aggaṃ bāhirakānaṃ diṭṭhigatānaṃ* (AN V 63). The reason for this comparatively favourable assessment in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* discourse may well be that a somewhat similar maxim was employed in Buddhist circles, with a small but decisive difference. The modified mode of this aspiration reads "may it not be, may it not be for me, it shall not be, and it will not be for me", *no c'assa, no ca me siyā, na bhavissati, na me bhavissati* (MN II 24; SN III 55; AN IV, 70; Ud 78). By replacing the first person formulation in the verb forms with the third person, the need to go beyond the self-notion implicit in the annihilationist approach becomes apparent.

A discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* explains how this aspiration can lead to the eradication of the lower fetters and onwards to final liberation. Uninstructed worldlings do not realize that each of the five aggregates is impermanent, unsatisfactory and devoid of self. Noble disciples, in contrast, understand the true nature of the five aggregates and thereon apply themselves to the aspiration "may it not be, may it not be for me, it shall not be, and it will not be for me". Practising in this way, the destruction of the lower fetters can be expected (SN III 57).

If this aspiration does not cause the arising of fear, and if all passion in regard to the five aggregates is overcome, then consciousness becomes unestablished, *apatiṭṭhita*, and final libera-

tion will be attained. The *Āneñjasappāya-sutta* notes that clinging to the equanimity developed in this way needs to be avoided in order for practice in accordance with this maxim to lead to final liberation (MN II 265).

According to the *Alagaddūpama-sutta*, contemporary recluses and Brahmins were of the opinion that the Buddha was an annihilationist, since they thought that he taught the annihilation, destruction and non-existence of an existing being, *sato sattassa ucchedaṃ vināsaṃ vibhavaṃ paññāpeti* (MN I 140). In reply to such mistaken assessments of his teaching, the Buddha would point out that what he taught was merely *dukkha* and its cessation.

General Sīha and the Brahmin Verañja had a similar misunderstanding of the Buddha's teaching. In reply to their assumptions that he was an annihilationist, the Buddha admitted, tongue in cheek, that in a way he could indeed by considered to be teaching annihilation: He taught the annihilation of unwholesome mental states, namely the annihilation of passion, anger and delusion (Vin I 235 = AN IV 182; Vin III 2 = AN IV 174).

Not only recluses and Brahmins, but at times even Buddhist monks could have misunderstandings in this respect. According to a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, the monk Yamaka had proclaimed that an *arahant* will be annihilated at death (SN III 109). This amounts to adopting one of the four modes of predicting the future destiny of an awakened being, according to which a Tathāgata − a term that at times can stand for a liberated one in general − either exists after death, or does not exist, or both, or neither.

The Buddha consistently refused to take up any of these positions (e.g. MN I 484). The basic problem involved in such proposals is the same as the one illustrated in the *Pañcattaya-*

sutta with the imagery of a dog that keeps running in circles around a pillar to which it is bound, representing the assumed existence of self about which predications can be made. The monk Yamaka's mistaken assertion was taken up by Sāriputta for closer examination, with the result that Yamaka had to admit that it was impossible to find a Tathāgata in truth and fact even here and now, hence what to say of any future existence or non-existence of a Tathāgata after death (SN III 112).

What happens at the death of an awakened one is put rather succinctly by the novice Adhimutta, who was about to be killed by a gang of brigands. Unruffled by any fear of death, he told the gang leader that, from his perspective, there was no cause to lament at the prospect of being killed, as merely *saṅkhāra*s will come to be non-existent, *saṅkhārā vibhavissanti, tattha kā paridevanā* (Th 715).

After this survey of the term *vibhava*, we are now ready to turn to craving for such non-existence or non-becoming, *vibhava-taṇhā*.

A self-evident example for such craving would be suicidal intentions, in the sense of those types of craving that motivate someone to forcefully put an end to life. Yet, for *vibhava-taṇhā* to be explicitly mentioned in the succinct presentation of the arising of *dukkha* in the second noble truth, alongside such basic motivating forces as sensual craving and craving for existence, *kāma-taṇhā* and *bhava-taṇhā*, one would expect *vibhava-taṇhā* to have broader implications than merely the wish to commit suicide.

Here it is of interest that the *Brahmajāla-sutta* lists seven grounds, *vatthu*, that lead to the arising of annihilationist views (DN I 34; see also Bodhi 1978). These seven are different modes of identifying a type of self and its cessation. The first of these seven modes identifies the self with the material body,

assuming that with the death of the body the self will become annihilated. This mode of thinking would correspond to the type of reasoning that motivates suicide, which assumes that, by cutting short one's life and forcefully bringing about the death of the material body, all problems will similarly come to an end. Whether this is based on an explicit belief in a self or only on an implicit self-notion, the rationale behind such a suicidal attempt is to find a solution by attempting to escape from the material body.

In its treatment of annihilationist views, the *Brahmajāla-sutta* also lists the possibility of identifying the self with a divine material body that feeds on gross food, or with a divine mind-made body that is endowed with limbs and faculties. The final four grounds for annihilationist views in the *Brahmajāla-sutta* involve the four immaterial attainments, namely the attainment of boundless space, boundless consciousness, nothingness, and neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

From the perspective of attempting to find a deeper meaning and a broader scope of implication for the term *vibhava-taṇhā*, the final four grounds for annihilationist views listed in the *Brahmajāla-sutta* are intriguing. They suggest that non-existence or non-becoming may have been envisioned as a goal to be reached through meditation practice in ancient India, in particular through attaining any of the immaterial spheres.

Since the experience of these immaterial spheres requires a considerable amount of meditative proficiency and practice, an annihilationist view related to the attainment or experience of these states could not reasonably assume that all beings are destined to such annihilation. That is, from the perspective of the upholders of such a view, annihilation would probably not have been considered as the inevitable fate of all beings, but

rather as a goal to be attained through an appropriate form of conduct and meditation practice.

The idea behind such an aspiration for annihilation could be a merger with a form of ultimate reality, held to be equivalent to boundless space, or to boundless consciousness, or to nothingness, or to neither-perception-nor-non-perception. Attaining such a merger at the death of the body, any self-hood would be successfully annihilated.

Support for this interpretation could be gathered from the *Dhātuvibhaṅga-sutta*, which describes the development of insight and detachment in regard to the experience of the immaterial attainments (MN III 244). In the concluding section of this description, just before turning to the attainment of final liberation, the *Dhātuvibhaṅga-sutta* indicates that at this high point of meditative development and mature insight one will be free from intentions and volitions in regard to existence or in regard to non-existence, *n' eva abhisaṅkharoti nābhisañcetayati bhavāya vā vibhavāya vā*.

In this context, intentions and volitions in regard to *vibhava* most certainly do not refer to any suicidal impulse. Instead, the implication of the passage seems to be that one who has reached this lofty stage of mental development is aloof from interest in any form of existence as well as in the type of merger with an ultimate immaterial reality, such as appears to be implicit in the *Brahmajāla-sutta*'s description.

That some contemporaries of the Buddha perceived annihilation as a goal to be attained through a particular mode of conduct and practice would also be implicit in the above-mentioned aspiration "may I not be, may it not be for me, I shall not be and it will not be for me", *no c' assaṃ, no ca me siyā, na bhavissāmi, na me bhavissati* (SN III 99). Since this formulation clearly involves an aspiration, here again it would not

make much sense to assume that all beings are destined to annihilation. Nor does this formulation appear to be merely the expression of a suicidal intent, otherwise the above-mentioned discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* would not reckon this aspiration as supreme among heterodox views (AN V 63). Instead, what this aspiration most probably implies is a form of annihilation that requires effort and practice, such as would indeed be required for attaining the immaterial spheres.

From this perspective, then, *vibhava-taṇhā* could be understood to comprise craving for annihilation in a materialist as well as a spiritual sense, ranging from the wish to destroy the physical body by suicide to the aspiration for leaving behind the sense of selfhood through a mystic merger with an ultimate reality. The decisive factor that these different modes of craving have in common is the assumed sense of a self that lurks behind them. From a Buddhist perspective, all these forms of craving are but manifestations of ignorance, since however refined the experience they aim at may be, the truth of the matter is that there was never a self to be annihilated in the first place.

1.3 The Arising of Craving

Factors that contribute to the arising of craving are mentioned in the second noble truth, according to which the arising of *dukkha* is directly related to craving that is accompanied by delight and passion, *nandī-rāga-sahagatā*, delighting here and there, *tatra tatrābhinandinī* (SN V 421). This reference to the tendency of delighting here and there, in this or that, reveals that once one perceives something as delightful, as gratifying, *assāda*, craving arises.

To highlight the dynamics that result from perceiving things as gratifying, the discourses employ several imageries. Just as a great fire, to which more fuel is added, will keep on burning

for a long time, so for those who perceive things that can be clung to as gratifying, *upādāniyesu dhammesu assādānupassino*, craving will increase (SN II 85).

A related image recurs in another simile that illustrates the situation of those who perceive things that can fetter as gratifying, *saññojaniyesu dhammesu assādānupassino*. For them, craving will increase just as an oil lamp will keep burning as long as oil is added and the wick is adjusted (SN II 86). Perceiving things that can be clung to, or that can fetter, as gratifying receives an additional treatment in two similes taken from the growth of trees. These similes illustrate how perception of gratification fosters the growth of craving with the example of a great tree that is well nourished through its roots (SN II 87), or of a sapling that is well cared for and watered (SN II 89).

Another discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* takes up the same theme in more detail, explaining that craving arises and becomes established in regard to whatever in this world is pleasant and agreeable, by mistaking it to be lasting, to provide real happiness and satisfaction, and finally by appropriating it (SN II 109). This discourse compares giving in to such craving to a thirsty man who partakes of a drink that is of exquisite taste, even though he knows it to contain poison.

These various presentations illustrate from complementary perspectives the indication given in the twelve-link presentation of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*, according to which the arising of *taṇhā* takes place in dependence on feeling, *vedana-paccayā* (SN II 1). Hence it is at the point when feelings arise and manifest that *taṇhā* needs to be kept in check. In a later essay in this collection, the nature of feeling and their insightful contemplation will be examined further.

The indication that the condition for the arising of craving is to be found in feeling also has another dimension, which comes to the fore in a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*. According to this discourse, a monk asked the Buddha: "Who craves?" (SN II 13). Such a question is not appropriate, the Buddha pointed out, since an inquiry into the nature of craving should rather be worded in terms of: "what is the condition for craving?"

In addition to pointing out the role of feeling as the condition for craving, the twelve-link presentation of dependent arising also highlights that *taṇhā* in turn is responsible for the arising of *upādāna*, clinging or grasping, and ultimately therewith for the arising of *dukkha*.

The unwholesome consequences that arise due to *taṇhā* are treated in more detail in the *Dasuttara-sutta* (DN III 289), which enumerates nine states that are rooted in craving, *taṇhā-mūlaka*. These begin with the quest for the desired object, *pariyesanā*, which, when successful, in turn leads to gain, *lābha*. Having obtained gain requires making decisions about what should be done with such gains, *vinicchaya*, due to which arise passion and desire, *chanda-rāga*. These lead via attachment to appropriation, *ajjhosāna* and *pariggaha*, out of which avarice and hoarding result, *macchariya* and *ārakkha*. The end result of all this, according to the *Dasuttara-sutta*, is the taking up of sticks and swords, quarrel, slander and falsehood etc.

These are the dire consequences that await those whose pursuit of the objects of craving has been successful. In the case of those who have not been able to satisfy the demands of their inner thirst, unwholesome states and reactions will arise all the more quickly.

The *Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta* describes how taking sensual pleasures to be gratifying leads to a quest for obtaining

them through earning a livelihood, a quest that in itself is often enough beset with much suffering, pain and at times even danger (MN I 86). When in spite of all effort this quest has not been successful, the poor victim sorrows and grieves, laments and weeps, crying in distress 'my work is in vain, my effort is fruitless'.

Should his or her efforts succeed, however, the gains will have to be protected against avaricious kings and cunning thieves, as well as against natural calamities. After depicting in detail the dangers that lurk at each of these successive steps needed to secure the objects of craving, the *Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta* turns to the taking up of sticks and swords as the final result of the quest to satisfy craving. To illustrate this final result, the discourse describes in gruesome detail the suffering and evils of quarrel, warfare and crime in ancient India.

In addition to being directed to sensual pleasures, craving may also manifest in relation to various forms of existence. A discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* points out that a first beginning of craving for existence, *bhava-taṇhā*, cannot be predicated (AN V 116). That is, craving for existence has been one's companion since time immemorial. Nevertheless, according to the same discourse a condition for craving for existence can be pointed out right in the present, which is none other than ignorance, *avijjā*.

For the ignorant ones who allow themselves to succumb to the arising of craving, sorrows grow, just as grass grows after rain (Dhp 335). In contrast, sorrow falls off from those who overcome craving like water from a lotus flower (Dhp 336). The image of the lotus untouched by water leads us to the next aspect to be explored in relation to *taṇhā*, to the cessation of craving.

1.4 The Cessation of Craving

The extinction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya*, stands on a par with various other epithets of *Nibbāna* (SN IV 371). As such, it occurs in a recurrent description of the final goal as the stilling of all formations, *sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*, the relinquishment of all substrata, *sabbūpadhi-paṭinissagga*, the extinction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya*, dispassion, *virāga*, cessation, *nirodha*, and *Nibbāna* (MN I 436). The same formula recurs also in the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta*, where it forms part of the Buddha's reflection that the extinction of craving as the supreme goal of spiritual endeavours will not easily be appreciated by those who are under the influence of delight and passion (MN I 167).

The complete and remainderless cessation of craving, *taṇhāya asesa-virāga-nirodho*, its giving up and relinquishment, *cāgo paṭinissaggo*, is the theme of the third noble truth, which points out that with the cessation of craving the cessation of *dukkha* is reached. The accomplished ones, who have become free from craving, *vītataṇhā*, have plucked out the darts of existence, *bhava-sallāni* (Dhp 351). Those who in regard to any of the five aggregates are devoid of craving, *vigatataṇhā*, are beyond any form of agitation when these aggregates change and become otherwise (SN III 8). At the same time, they are also beyond any speculative views on the destiny of an awakened one after death (SN IV 387). In fact, for those who are freed through the destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya-vimuttino*, any standpoint for views has been uprooted, *diṭṭhiṭṭhānā samūhatā* (It 48).

The liberation attained through the destruction of craving also implies the highest degree of ethical perfection in early Buddhism. Thus an *arahant*, one who has completely eradicated all forms of craving, is incapable of consciously killing a living being, of taking what has not been given, of engaging in

sex, of knowingly speaking falsehood, and of enjoying sensual pleasures by hoarding as is usually done in households (MN I 523).

One who has thus been freed through the destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhaye vimutta*, is reckoned by the wise as a sage (Sn 211). Such a sage rid of craving, *nittaṇhā*, has gone beyond the vision of the world with its gods (Ud 77). Having abandoned craving, *taṇhaṃ pahatvāna*, such a one deserves to be reckoned a true Brahmin (Dhp 416). For such a true Brahmin there is no more questing or searching, just as there is no need to search for a well when water is available all around (Ud 79).

The freedom that results from the destruction of craving yields supreme happiness. According to a verse in the *Udāna*, whether it is the sensual happiness of the world or the divine happiness in heaven, none of them is worth even the sixteenth part of the happiness of the destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya-sukha* (Ud 11). Since it is reasonable to give up a smaller happiness, if in this way a greater and superior happiness can be gained (Dhp 290), a true disciple of the Buddha does not delight even in divine pleasures, but delights in the destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya-rato hoti* (Dhp 187).

1.5 The Path to Freedom from Craving

The path to freedom from craving is the same as the path to freedom from *dukkha*, namely the noble eightfold path (SN IV 371). More specifically, the path to the destruction of craving can be found in the development of the seven awakening factors, *bojjhaṅga* (SN V 86), and of the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s (SN V 300).

Since craving arises and grows due to perceiving something as gratifying, *assāda*, viewing things as unsatisfactory − by di-

recting attention to their inherent disadvantage and danger, *ādīnava* − leads to diminishing and eventually to eradicating craving. In the case of sensual craving, such craving grows ever more as long as particular aspects of the body are seen as beautiful, *subhānupassino bhiyyo taṇhā pavaḍḍhati* (Dhp 349). Counter-methods for sensual craving would therefore be contemplating aspects of the body that are not beautiful, *asubha*. This could be undertaken by directing mindfulness to the anatomical parts of the body, for example, as described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* (MN I 57).

The unsatisfactory nature of sensual pleasures is the theme of a series of similes delivered in the *Potaliya-sutta* (MN I 364-366). According to this discourse, to search for satisfaction through sensuality is comparable to a hungry dog that gnaws a meatless bone, or to a bird that has gotten hold of a bit of food but is being attacked by other birds and therefore has to let go of the food again in order to avoid injury. Thirst for sensuality burns, just like a blazing torch held against the wind, or like falling into a burning charcoal pit. Sensual pleasures are illusory like a dream, or like parading with things that are owned by others. To pursue sensual pleasures is dangerous, similar to climbing up a tree in search of fruit, only to find that the tree is being cut down by another person.

Another simile in the *Māgandiya-sutta* compares indulging in sensual pleasures to a leper, who cauterises his wounds over a fire and scratches them, experiencing momentary relief by an act that aggravates his condition. (MN I 507). The chief purpose behind these sometimes stark similes is to aid in the development of wisdom that sees craving for sensual satisfaction as futile and meaningless.

To eradicate the mode of craving that is directed to forms of existence, *bhava-taṇhā*, requires the development of deeper in-

sight, *abhiññā* (MN III 289). Such deeper insight would in particular be insight into the illusory nature of the notion "I am", which is the very basis for any craving for existence. To overcome craving for existence, what has come into being should be seen simply as something that has come into being, *bhūtaṃ bhūtato disvā* (It 44), i.e. as the product of a conditioned process and without imposing any "I" notions on it. Based on such understanding, the task then is to develop detachment and disenchantment. What is required above all is a sober appreciation of the true nature of one's own existence, and of the ultimately unsatisfactory nature of all forms of existence.

According to an instruction delivered by Ānanda, craving should be overcome by basing oneself on craving, *taṇhaṃ nissāya taṇhā pahātabbā* (AN II 145). As the same discourse explains, based on craving for liberation, other forms of craving can be overcome. The tantalizing use of *taṇhā* in an evidently positive sense in this passage, namely as a term that represents the highest of aspirations – the wish to reach full liberation – is significant. This passage is not unique in its presentation, since the possibility that there can be wholesome forms of craving is also envisaged in the *Nettipakaraṇa*, which distinguishes between wholesome and unwholesome types of craving, *taṇhā duvidhā, kusalā pi akusalā pi* (Nett 87).

Ānanda's indication that craving can become the very means to overcome craving reveals a gradual procedure, which replaces unwholesome forms of craving and desire with more wholesome counterparts. The central point behind this presentation is to bring out the need for a gradual approach when trying to eradicate craving.

Another aspect of the same dictum is the need to develop wisdom, in the sense that to overcome craving through craving requires a clear distinction between wholesome objects of de-

sire and their unwholesome counterparts. Such wisdom is based on the clear ethical distinction between what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, and is coupled with the insight that the objects of unwholesome cravings are of such nature that they will never yield any lasting or true satisfaction.

The gradual approach that underlies the presentation according to which craving should be overcome through craving thus enjoins a gradual shift of the basic mode of craving and desire from unwholesome to wholesome objects. This gradual approach is based on clear awareness of the fact that the deep-seated tendency to craving can only be overcome through an approach that treats wholesome forms of 'desire' and even 'craving' as tools for progressing on the path to freedom from all desires and cravings. Thus, "release from craving initially relies upon craving for its release" (Matthews 1983: 81).

The difficulties involved in overcoming craving, which make it pertinent that a gradual approach is employed, are reflected in an allegorical manner in the *Cūḷataṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta*. This discourse reports how Sakka, the king of gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, approached the Buddha with the question of how to become liberated through the destruction of craving, *taṇhā-saṅkhaya-vimutta* (MN I 251). The Buddha's poignant reply was that there is nothing worth sticking to, *sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*.

Yet, for Sakka to be able to put this penetrative maxim into practice was apparently not easy. In fact, after receiving this instruction, Sakka returned to heaven and continued disporting himself with his heavenly maiden in a pleasure pond. It needed the timely intervention of Mahāmoggallāna, who through a feat of supernatural power made the beautiful palace of Sakka shake and tremble, to bring the king of gods to his senses.

This tale allegorically highlights the difficulties of putting the path to freedom from craving into practice, as this requires moving right against the current of satisfying desire, and demands undertaking sustained practice that goes well beyond a mere superficial intellectual appreciation. Yet, every single step that moves against this current, and thereby withstands the attraction of Māra's daughter Taṇhā (SN I 124), is an all-important step in the direction of the true happiness of freedom from craving.

2. Passion / *Rāga*

The Pāli term *rāga* stands for "lust" or "passion". Together with anger, *dosa*, and delusion, *moha*, passion is one of the fundamental defilements recognized in early Buddhism. Here *rāga* stands for "a state of lack, need and want. It is always seeking fulfilment ... but its drive is inherently insatiable, and thus as long as it endures it maintains the sense of lack" (Ñāṇaponika 1986: 4).

In the present essay, I will at first examine the nature of passion (2.1), followed by turning to the removal of passion (2.2) and to the significance of "dispassion", *virāga* (2.3).

2.1 The Nature of Passion

Passion features prominently in the second noble truth, according to which the entire range of the human predicament can be traced to craving, which is accompanied by "passion", *rāga*, and delight, *taṇhā nandirāgasahagatā* (SN V 421). *Rāga* has moreover received the dubious honour of being reckoned as one of the daughters of Māra, together with Craving and Discontent (SN I 124). This highlights the importance and detrimental repercussions of this particular mental defilement, and its close relationship to the problem of craving.

When passion arises in the mind, one becomes unable to discern what constitutes one's own and another's welfare, a predicament that easily leads to evil conduct by way of body, speech and mind (AN I 215). Passion in the form of sensual

passion, *kāmarāga*, causes householders to quarrel with each other, while passion manifesting as passionate attachment to views, *diṭṭhirāga*, will cause recluses to quarrel with each other (AN I 66). Such passionate attachment stands at the back of much philosophical speculation, which in the final count can be traced to the presence of passion in regard to the five aggregates (SN IV 387).

Once sensual passion, *kāmarāga*, is present in the mind, one of its consequences is forgetfulness, as passion makes it difficult to keep things in mind even though they have been repeatedly memorized (SN V 121). The debilitating influence of passion not only impairs memory, but also perception. Beings not free from passion in relation to sensual pleasures suffer from a perceptual distortion, *viparītasaññā*, which causes them to attribute happiness to what on sober inspection turns out to fall short of providing true happiness (MN I 507).

The deluded notions that result from the influence of passion on the mind are as illusory as the images of a woman or a man created by a painter − however real they may seem, they remain artificially created images (SN II 101). Though such notions are illusory, their repercussions are all too real, as passion can set the whole mind on fire (SN I 188). No other fire, indeed, is comparable to the fire of passion (Dhp 202).

A monk or a nun who goes begging for food without sense-restraint, or who is given to excessive socialization, can easily be overwhelmed by passion, tormenting them to such an extent that they might commit an offence or disrobe (AN III 95 and AN III 393). The degree to which passion can lead to mental distress can be inferred from the case of the nun Sīha, who was driven to the verge of suicide because for years sensual passion, *kāmarāga*, prevented her from getting any peace of mind (Thī 77-81).

Sensual passion, *kāmarāga*, is responsible for the arising of fear and dread not only in regard to the present, but also in regard to the future (AN IV 289). Fear in regard to the present moment arises when one retires to a secluded spot in the forest with a mind under the influence of passion (MN I 17). Fear in regard to the future arises when one is afflicted by some disease and fear of death manifests, a fear transcended only by those who are free from passion in relation to sensual pleasures (AN II 173).

In view of these manifold disadvantages, it comes as no surprise that the removal of passion is a central concern of the Buddha's teaching. In telling contrast to the present and future predicament caused by passion stands the happiness incumbent on gaining freedom from lust and passion. Such happiness constitutes the peak of unworldly happiness, *nirāmisā nirāmisataraṃ sukhaṃ* (SN IV 237). This may not seem obvious at first sight, since from a worldly perspective a man might imagine happiness to be found in staying in the company of beautiful women in a lavishly furnished dwelling place. Yet, due to his passion such a man will experience bodily and mental torments and suffering (AN I 136). Once he has overcome passion, in contrast, he will be free from such torments and live happily, even if he stays out in the open, subject to the vicissitudes of the climate and with only the hard ground to rest on.

A close inspection of the Buddha's behaviour and way of acting, undertaken by a young Brahmin in the *Brahmāyu-sutta*, resulted in the following telling observation: the Buddha took food experiencing its taste, yet without experiencing passion for the taste, *rasapaṭisaṃvedī ... no ca rasarāgapaṭisaṃvedī* (MN II 138). This highlights that the problem posed by passion is not solved by simply avoiding experience, but rather needs to be tackled on a deeper level. One who has succeeded in tackling passion at this deeper level is able to fully experience

sense-objects without giving any room to mental reactions and associations under the influence of passion and desires.

Just as when two oxen are yoked together, neither of the two oxen is responsible for the other being bound, so too neither the sense-organs nor the sense-objects are responsible for bondage, since desire and passion, *chandarāga*, are what fetters (SN IV 163).

The important and variegated repercussions of passion find their reflection in the inclusion of *rāga* in various central categories of early Buddhism. One of these categories describes the *saṃyojana*s, the "fetters" that bind beings to *saṃsāri*c existence. Here passion makes its appearance as "sensual passion", *kāmarāga*, the first of the five lower fetters (MN I 433). Once sensual passion has been transcended, one's future rebirth will similarly surpass the sensuous sphere (SN II 99). Passion recurs in the context of the fetters, *saṃyojana*, where it is directed to the material and immaterial spheres, *rūparāga* and *arūparāga*, two out of the five higher fetters (DN III 234). Alternative enumerations of the fetters speak also of the "fetter of passion for existence", *bhavarāgasaṃyojana* (AN IV 7).

Another of these categories lists the "four [types of] bonds", *cattāro yogā*, where passion underlies three out of the four (AN II 10). These three are the bondage to sensuality due to sensual passion, *kāmarāga*; the bondage to existence due to passion for existence, *bhavarāga*; and the bondage of views as a manifestation of passion for views, *diṭṭhirāga*.

The image of being bound recurs again with the five types of mental bondages, *cetaso vinibandhā*, which undermine the inspiration to practice and thereby prevent growth in the *Dhamma* (MN I 101). Three out of this set of five are manifestations of *rāga* in the form of passion in relation to sensual pleasures, in relation to to the body and in relation to to forms. A meta-

phor in the *Dhammapada* sums up these various perspectives on the bondage caused by passion: to be under the influence of passion is a predicament comparable to a spider caught in his own net (Dhp 347).

Another important category in early Buddhism is concerned with the *anusaya*s, the "underlying tendencies" that lie latent in the mind and lead to the arising of defilements. Here passion makes its appearance in two out of seven cases (DN III 254): as the underlying tendency to sensual passion, *kāmarāgānusaya*, and as the underlying tendency to passion for existence, *bhavarāgānusaya*. The underlying tendency to sensual passion is already present in the case of a newborn baby, even though an infant would not yet be able to conceive the idea of sensuality (MN I 433).

The activation of passion as an underlying tendency is closely linked to the arising of pleasant feelings. This relation, however, is not one of necessity, since some pleasant feelings, such as those experienced in meditative absorption, *jhāna*, do not activate this underlying tendency (MN I 303). In relation to more mundane types of pleasant feelings, however, a sustained effort needs to be made to move beyond the influence of this underlying tendency.

A manifestation of passion which may not pertain to the realm of what is unwholesome could be *dhammarāga*, "passion for the *Dhamma*". This term makes its appearance in instances where someone fails to reach full liberation and, due to such *dhammarāga*, he or she gains non-return (MN I 350). The way these instances are formulated seems to allow for two explanations. One could either take *dhammarāga* to be the factor that has prevented attaining full liberation, or else to be the factor that has ensured at least the gain of non-return.

The commentarial explanation supports the first alternative, understanding *dhammarāga* to represent *chandarāga*, "lustful longing" in relation to one's meditative experiences (Ps III 146). This interpretation did, apparently, not remain unchallenged. The same commentary records the argument that on following this interpretation an unwholesome mental factor is made responsible for leading to such sublime attainment as non-return and its consequent rebirth in the Pure Abodes.

Such a problem could be avoided with the alternative interpretation. On adopting this alternative understanding, just as there could be wholesome forms of craving, *taṇhā*, in the form of craving for liberation, so too could there be wholesome forms of passion, *rāga*, once such craving or passion is directed towards wholesome objectives.

Be that as it may, a mental factor entirely in the realm of what is unwholesome is *adhammarāga*, "unlawful passion", an expression which according to the *Atthasālinī* refers to incestuous lust (As 366). The *Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta* reckons that such *adhammarāga* is characteristic of periods when human civilization is on the decline (DN III 70). Another discourse describes the dire consequences of indulging in *adhammarāga*, which apparently not only causes the arising of quarrels and fighting, but can also lead to adverse climatic conditions and an increase in demonic forces (AN I 160).

2.2 The Removal of Passion

Contemplation of the mind in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* (MN I 59) directs mindfulness to the task of recognizing the presence or absence of any form of passion. Such introspective recognition of the presence or the absence of passion in the mind shows that the Buddha's instructions are a directly and immediately visible teaching, which invites one to come and see,

leading onwards and to be experienced personally by the wise (SN IV 41)

Compared with "anger", *dosa*, passion is less blameable, though it takes longer to be overcome (AN I 200). The arising of passion can be traced to two main conditions: the "sign of beauty", *subhanimitta*, often attributed to the physical body of the other gender, and "unwise attention", *ayoniso manasikāra* (AN I 87). The obvious counter method, therefore, is wise attention to the less appealing aspects of the body, examining its anatomical constitution and the unattractive nature of its parts (AN III 323). Additional counter strategies include developing restraint of the senses, contentment with food, wakefulness and mindfulness together with clear comprehension (AN IV 166).

In order to ensure that one's mind is not overwhelmed by passion, recollection of the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Saṅgha* can be undertaken (AN III 286). From among the four divine abodes, *brahmavihāra*, the meditative development of equanimity as a liberation of the mind, *upekkhā cetovimutti*, stands out as an "escape", *nissaraṇa*, from passion (DN III 249).

These passages indicate that the development of mental tranquillity, *samatha*, can also function as an antidote to passion. This point is made explicitly in a discourse in the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, which indicates that to develop tranquillity leads to developing the mind, whereby passion will be eradicated, *samatho bhāvito ... cittaṃ bhāvīyati, cittaṃ bhāvitaṃ ... yo rāgo so pahīyati* (AN I 61).

The rationale behind this passage is that the experience of deeper states of concentration is accompanied by intense pleasure and happiness, brought about by purely mental means, thereby automatically eclipsing any happiness that arises in dependence on sensual pleasures. Thus the development of

mental tranquillity can become a powerful antidote to passion by divesting its objects of their former attraction.

2.3 Passion and Dispassion

The term *rāga* is derived from the root *raj*, "to colour", and can also mean "colour" or "dye". *Rāga* occurs in this sense in a passage in the *Vinaya* which reports a group of notoriously ill behaved monks using "face colour", *mukharāga*, apparently an ancient Indian type of makeup (Vin II 107).

The two meanings of *rāga* are to some extent interrelated, since *rāga* as passion or lust is a mental quality that "colours" the mind. The discourses illustrate this colouring influence of sensual passion, *kāmarāga*, with the example of someone attempting to see the reflection of his or her face in water mixed with dye (SN V 121). Due to the presence of the dye, the natural mirroring function of the water is distorted, making it impossible to properly see the reflection of one's face.

The alternative sense of *rāga* as colour becomes particularly evident with the term *virāga*, which depending on context can either mean "fading away", derived from the sense of decolouration, or else "dispassion", derived from the primary sense of *rāga* as lust or passion. These two senses of *virāga* can to some extent be related to each other, since contemplating the "fading away" and therewith the impermanent nature of phenomena will result in "dispassion". A play on both senses of the term can be found in such instances as when the purpose of the Buddha's teaching is declared to be *rāgavirāga*, the "fading away of passion" (SN IV 47).

The scope and relevance of these two aspects of the term *virāga* as "fading away" and as "dispassion" can best be exemplified through a survey of occurrences of *virāga* in a series of different contexts.

The idea of "fading away" appears to be more prominent in contexts where *virāga* is preceded by "impermanence" and followed by "cessation" and "relinquishment", *nirodha* and *paṭinissagga*, as is the case with the final four steps of mindfulness of breathing (MN III 83). Alternatively, *virāga* can also be preceded by "impermanence" and "change", *anicca* and *vipariṇāma*. This perspective is applied, for example, to the five aggregates (SN III 43). Here, too, "fading away" appears to fit the context best.

The same idea of "fading away" would also be prominent when *virāga* is preceded by *khaya*, "destruction". This is the case, for example, in a description of how the mind is freed by the destruction and fading away of craving, *taṇhā ... khayā virāgā ... cittaṃ suvimuttaṃ* (SN III 13). Quite often *virāga* is preceded by "destruction" and "decay", *khaya* and *vaya*. These three qualifications could be applied to the three types of feelings (e.g. MN I 500); to the five aggregates (SN III 24); to the twelve links of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda* (SN II 26); to the knowledge of the fixedness of the principle of dependent arising, *dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇa* (SN II 60); or else they could be part of a contemplation capable of leading to final liberation (AN IV 146). In all these instances, the sense of "fading away" appears to be the prominent meaning.

Alternatively *virāga* can be preceded by "removal", *pahāna*. In such cases, the sense of "dispassion" seems to be the more prominent meaning. These two terms occur in relation to five "perceptions that ripen in liberation", *vimuttiparipācaniya saññā* (DN III 243); in relation to five things whose development leads to liberation of the mind and liberation by wisdom (AN III 85); and in relation to overcoming a whole host of defilements (AN III 277). A list of nine perceptions whose development is of great fruit also culminates in "perception of re-

moval" and "perception of dispassion", *pahāna-saññā* and *virāga-saññā* (AN IV 387).

In numerous instances, "removal" and "dispassion" are followed by "cessation", *nirodha*, a triad that occurs frequently in listings of types of perception. Examples are the six "perceptions conducive to penetration", *nibbedha-bhāgiya-saññā* (DN III 251); which are at the same time six "things conducive to knowledge", *vijjābhāgiyā dhammā* (SN V 345 and AN III 334); and six things that lead to the removal of various defilements (AN III 452). Another example are the seven "things that prevent decline", *aparihāniyā dhammā* (DN II 79 and AN IV 24); which are seven perceptions (DN III 253) whose development leads to overcoming all kinds of defilements (AN IV 148); and which therefore are "things to be aroused", *dhammā uppādetabbā* (DN III 283).

The theme of "things to be aroused" recurs also in a nine-fold and a ten-fold formulation (DN III 289 and DN III 291), both of which should be developed to overcome various defilements (AN IV 465 and AN V 309). The triad "removal, dispassion, cessation" also features in a list of ten perceptions that are of great fruit, which the mind should be well familiarized with (AN V 105 and AN V 107); and in a long list of meditation topics whose development is highly recommended, even if only done for a short time (AN I 41; see also SN V 132).

In most of these listings, the triad "removal, dispassion, cessation", *pahāna*, *virāga*, *nirodha*, is preceded by the triad "impermanent, unsatisfactory, not-self", *anicca, dukkha, anattā*, or by a set of terms that, in addition to impermanence and not-self, may involve the absence of beauty, *asubha*, or "disadvantage", *ādīnava*, etc.

In sum, when *virāga* is preceded by terminology related to impermanence alone, its predominant sense appears to be that

of "fading away". When, however, *virāga* is preceded by "removal", often in contexts that also refer to unsatisfactoriness and to not-self, then the sense of "dispassion" appears to be most prominent.

Such "dispassion" is thus the outcome of a full appreciation of the true nature of reality, preceded by "removal", *pahāna*, and almost always followed by "cessation", *nirodha*. The triad "removal, dispassion, cessation" thus forms a counterpart to the triad "impermanent, unsatisfactory, not-self", *anicca, dukkha, anattā*. While these three are the main characteristics of reality that need to be understood with insight, the triad "removal, dispassion, cessation" depicts the detachment that ensues once insight into the three characteristics matures.

The sequence underlying the insight triad "impermanent, unsatisfactory, not-self" is significant, since one leads to another. Thus based on awareness of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness is appreciated. Based on appreciation of unsatisfactoriness in turn, insight into not-self arises. This dynamic becomes evident in a recurring sequence that proceeds from awareness of impermanence to viewing the unsatisfactory quality of what is impermanent, followed by recognizing the selfless nature of what is unsatisfactory, *aniccasaññā, anicce dukkhasaññā, dukkhe anattasaññā* (e.g. AN III 85).

Similarly, in the case of the affective triad "removal, dispassion, cessation" a progression can be discerned. This progression moves from the more active "removal" to the experience of "dispassion", which then reaches its culminating point in "cessation".

A more detailed explanation of the implications of these three can be culled from the *Girimānanda-sutta* (AN V 110). According to this discourse, "perception of removal", *pahānasaññā* requires not indulging in any thought related to sensual-

ity, anger and harming. "Perception of dispassion" and "perception of cessation", *virāga-saññā* and *nirodha-saññā*, then stand for inclining the mind towards the final goal by reflecting in accordance with the maxim that "this is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all formations, the relinquishment of all substrata, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, *Nibbāna*", *etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ*. The only difference is that in the case of perception of dispassion, the maxim does not mention "cessation"; and in the case of perception of cessation, "dispassion" is not mentioned.

This suggests that the last two perceptions are similar in meaning. Perhaps "cessation" represents a slightly more definite and final form of leaving behind attachment to the world and of inclining the mind towards *Nibbāna* than perception of dispassion. The preceding perception of removal, however, clearly sets in at a more gross level, when unwholesome thoughts are still to be overcome. Their removal would then be the basis for inclining the mind towards the peacefulness of *Nibbāna* in accordance with the above maxim.

The topic of *Nibbāna* is also prominent in another series of terms that include *virāga*. This series of terms qualifies a type of teaching or conduct as leading to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, peace, higher insight, awakening and *Nibbāna*, *nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati* (e.g. DN I 189). The point made by this qualification is that such teaching or conduct is capable of leading to liberation. This thus depicts the outcome of dispassion, namely inner peace, higher insight and awakening. Together with disenchantment, dispassion and cessation

are the essential steps that lead to final liberation (e.g. SN III 163).

The relationship between dispassion and disenchantment, *nibbidā*, is taken up in a discourse in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. The discourse points out that dispassion, *virāga*, has disenchantment as its proximate cause (SN II 30). The same discourse continues by indicating that liberation has *virāga* as its proximate cause. That is, the whole purpose of dispassion is liberation, *virāgo vimuttattho* (SN III 189), or knowledge and vision of liberation, *virāgo vimuttiñāṇadassanattho* (AN V 312). Conversely, without dispassion it is impossible to reach knowledge and vision of liberation (AN V 314). Hence it is through dispassion that one reaches liberation, *virāgā vimuccati* (e.g. MN I 139).

The mental factors particularly required for reaching final liberation are the factors of awakening, *bojjhaṅga*, and in relation to these *virāga* also makes an appearance. For the seven factors of awakening to lead to knowledge and liberation, they need to be practiced in dependence on seclusion, 'dispassion' and cessation, so that they will culminate in letting go, *vivekanissita, virāganissita, nirodhanissita, vossaggapariṇāmin* (MN III 88). The same set of four is of relevance not only in relation to the seven factors of awakening, but also for the development of the five faculties or powers (e.g. SN IV 365), and in relation to the noble eightfold path (e.g. SN V 45).The final goal to be reached by this noble eightfold path, *Nibbāna*, is but the destruction of lust or passion, *rāga*, and its allied evils of anger and delusion (SN IV 251). Hence *virāga* is one of the epithets of *Nibbāna* (DN II 36).

When once asked to point out a cause for the purification of beings, according to a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* the Buddha explained that this can be found in dispassion, *virāga*

(SN III 70). Another discourse indicates that whatever leads to dispassion should be considered as the Buddha's teaching (AN IV 280). Hence those who have confidence in dispassion have confidence in the highest and will gain the highest profit (It 88).

Again, those who teach the overcoming of passion and its allied evils are speakers of *Dhamma*, *dhammavādī*; those who practice for the overcoming of passion are practising well, *suppaṭipanna*; and those who have overcome passion are "well-gone" indeed, *sugata* (SN IV 252). Of all things or phenomena, dispassion stands out as supreme (AN II 34).

In sum, then, dispassion can be seen to comprise in a nutshell the whole gamut of the *Dhamma*, covering the path to be taken as well as the goal to be reached. As a path to be taken, *virāga* counteracts the chief culprits for the *saṃsāric* predicament: passion, desire and craving. Their hold on the mind will gradually be reduced by seeing all the enticing aspects of experience for what they truly are. By allowing their attraction to 'fade away', their superficially colourful appearance is 'decoloured'.

The central means for such decolouration or fading away is sustained awareness of their impermanent nature. Such direct experience of the impermanent nature of all aspects of experience needs to be complemented by a clear apprehension of the other two characteristics, unsatisfactoriness and not-self, in order to culminate in 'dispassion'. With the onset of true dispassion the path gains momentum, leading from the gradual 'fading away' of 'passion', *rāgavirāga*, in regard to any aspect of experience, to a thorough 'fading away' and disappearance of all aspects of experience with the attainment of stream-entry.

This first experience of the supramundane, of *Nibbāna*, at stream-entry then becomes the most thorough 'fading away'

possible. Here even the sense of 'I' that otherwise pervades all experiences has to yield to such 'fading away', and therewith all identifications are similarly subject to 'decolouration'. At this stage, *virāga* in its supreme sense as an epithet for the final goal has become an experienced reality. With progress to the higher stages of awakening, *virāga* will further unfold its 'dispassioning' potential. For the *arahant*, then, *virāga* has become so all-encompassing that any trace of sensual passion and any passion for self or existence has been forever turned into 'dispassion'. In this way, the mind of an *arahant* has been totally 'decoloured' of the colouring forces of unwholesome states and tendencies.

"Highest of all paths is the eightfold [noble path],
And of all truths the four-part [noble truth],
Highest of [all] phenomena is dispassion,
And of two-footed [humans] the one with vision."

Maggān' aṭṭhaṅgiko seṭṭho,
saccānaṃ caturo padā,
virāgo seṭṭho dhammānaṃ,
dipadānañca cakkhumā (*Dhp* 273).

3. Ill-will / *Vyāpāda*

The negative repercussions of ill-will, *vyu pu da* or *byāpāda*, are treated from a set of related angles in the Pāli discourses, where ill-will makes its appearance in a number of categories that describe unwholesome states or tendencies. The present essay will begin by surveying manifestations of ill-will among these categories (3.1), followed by turning to its arising (3.2) and to the way to overcome ill-will (3.3).

3.1 Manifestations of Ill-will:

3.1a Ill-will as a Form of Wrong Intention

Ill-will is one of the three types of wrong intention, which are the "intention of sensuality", *kāmasaṅkappa*, the "intention of ill-will", *vyāpādasaṅkappa*, and the "intention of harming", *vihiṃsāsaṅkappa* (e.g. MN III 73). These three types of intention stand in direct opposition to progress on the path to liberation. Their counterparts − intention of renunciation, non-ill-will and harmlessness − constitute right intention as part of the noble eightfold path.

It is noteworthy that in this three-fold listing "harming" should stand besides "ill-will", even though the two would seem to be closely related to each other. The reason for this could be the emphasis on non-violence, *ahiṃsā*, among ancient Indian recluses and wanderers.

A similar concern is reflected in a *Vinaya* regulation, according to which it is not appropriate for Buddhist monastics to partake of meat that is killed deliberately for them (Vin I 238). Other *Vinaya* regulations protect plant life and even microbic beings in water, reflecting a concern with not harming living beings prevalent among contemporary recluses and ascetics. Such rules prohibit digging soil, cutting plants, and pouring out or making use of water that contains living beings (Vin IV 32; Vin IV 34; Vin IV 49; Vin IV 125).

The same concern also extends to the laity. In fact the very first precept to be undertaken by a lay Buddhist is to refrain from killing any living being (Khp 1, for monastics see Vin IV 124). This shows the degree to which abstention from harming was seen as an integral aspect of proper conduct among early Buddhists.

As the above instances show, not all of actions considered as harmful would necessarily be an expression of overt ill-will. Thus perhaps the need to take intentional harm into account stands at the background of the fact that the discourses distinguish between three types of wrong intention, placing ill-will side by side with harming.

A mind free from the three types of wrong intention, then, is a mind of pure or undisturbed intentions, *anāvilasaṅkappa* (AN V 31). To stay free from ill-will and maintain harmlessness is of such importance to progress on the path that it can be compared to the weaponry of a war chariot (SN V 6). Hence the *Sallekha-sutta* enjoins that, though others may be full of ill-will, one should make a determined effort to remain free from it oneself (MN I 42).

3.1b Ill-will as an Underlying Tendency

Vyāpāda is the last in a set of five underlying tendencies, *anusaya*, described in the *Mahāmaluṅkya-sutta* (MN I 433). In this particular instance, *vyāpāda* replaces the more usual "irritation", *paṭigha*, found in the standard listing of seven underlying tendencies (e.g. DN III 254).

The *Mahāmaluṅkya-sutta* explains that a small infant already has an underlying tendency to ill-will. This is so even though a newborn child would not yet have the perception of a 'being', making it impossible for ill-will against other beings to actually arise in the child (MN I 433).

Thus ill-will is part of the basic emotional set up of unawakened beings, independent of whether one is already mature enough to experience actual manifestations of ill-will.

3.1c Ill-will as a Fetter

Vyāpāda is also the last of the five lower fetters, *orambhāgiya saṃyojana* (DN III 234). These five lower fetters quite literally fetter mankind to transmigration in those realms of *saṃsāra* still related to sensuality.

While the first three lower fetters are overcome with the attainment of stream-entry, the fetter of sensuality and the fetter of ill-will are only left behind with non-return. Though the total removal of the last traces of ill-will thus takes place at a rather advanced stage of progress along the path, to tackle its grosser manifestations is already incumbent on the beginning phases of practice.

3.1d Ill-will as a Pathway of Action

In a listing of ten pathways of action, *kammapatha*, ill-will comes as the ninth in the series, preceded by covetousness. The

Sāleyyaka-sutta explains that such ill-will involves the wish for other beings to be killed, slaughtered, annihilated, destroyed, and come to be non-existent (MN I 287).

This series of wishes reflects the degree to which ill-will can narrow down one's perception of someone as the sole culprit responsible for a problematic situation, leading to the assumption that to eliminate this person is the only viable solution. As a pathway of action, such ill-will is a way of undertaking things that is bound to result in future *dukkha* (MN I 313).

3.1e Ill-will as a Bodily Tie

In a group of four bodily ties, *kāyagantha*, ill-will occupies the second position (DN III 230). In this listing ill-will comes after covetousness, *abhijjhā*, which also precedes it in the ten pathways of action and which is similar in kind to the sensual desire, *kāmarāga*, that precedes ill-will in the listings of wrong intentions, underlying tendencies and lower fetters. This pattern also recurs in relation to occurrences of ill-will in another two schemes, namely the hindrances and the mental defilements, where ill-will again follows sensual desires or the related covetousness.

This recurrent pattern of listing ill-will after sensual desire or covetousness need not be a matter of chance, but could point to an underlying relationship between the two. Both are comparatively gross defilements of the mind that need to be overcome in order to progress on the path. The two are also to some extent related to each other, in as much as ill-will easily arises as a consequence of frustrated desire.

This is reflected in an analysis given in the *Sakkapañha-sutta*. This discourse takes up the question of why beings who wish to be free from ill-will nevertheless succumb to it (DN II 276). In an intriguing analysis of a series of conditions, the

Sakkapañha-sutta traces the arising of ill-will to selfishness, holding things as dear, desires, thoughts and conceptual proliferations. The way out of this predicament, according to the same discourse, is to pursue only such types of joy, *somanassa*, that do not have unwholesome consequences. Hence ill-will does indeed seem to stand in a close relationship to desires.

3.1f Ill-will as a Mental Corruption

Ill-will comes in second place after covetousness in the context of a whole series of mental corruptions or defilements, *upakkilesa*, listed in the *Vatthūpama-sutta* (MN I 36). The *Vatthūpama-sutta* compares the presence of any of these mental corruptions to stains that make it impossible to properly dye a piece of cloth. According to the *Cūḷa-assapura-sutta*, as long as ill-will is not brought under control, a monk is not really engaging in the path that makes him worthy of being reckoned a recluse, *samaṇa* (MN I 281).

The same is illustrated in a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*. This discourse indicates that a monk, who by going forth has already lost out on the possible enjoyment of a householder, also misses out on becoming a true recluse if he allows himself to be under the influence of ill-will. His predicament is comparable to a piece of wood from a funeral pyre that is burnt at both ends and smeared with dung in the middle, therefore being in a condition where it cannot be put to any other use whatsoever (SN III 93).

3.1g Ill-will as a Hindrance

Ill-will is also the second of the five hindrances (e.g. DN III 234), where it comes after sensual desire, *kāmacchanda*, or in some alternative listings after covetousness, *abhijjhā*. As a hindrance, ill-will could be either "internal", in the sense of aris-

ing within oneself, or else "external", in the sense of being present in others (SN V 110). Both aspects deserve attention. Not only is one's own ill-will blameworthy, but also encouraging or approving of ill-will in others should be avoided (AN I 299). Another aspect of the distinction between external and internal manifestations of ill-will may be related to its objects, in that ill-will could not only be directed to others, but can also manifest as self-hatred.

A set of similes describes the nature of the hindrances with the example of a bowl full of water, which is used as a mirror to see the reflection of one's face. Here ill-will is similar to the water being heated up and boiling (SN V 122 and AN III 231). Such a condition would make it impossible to use the water as a mirror. The imagery of boiling water aptly illustrates the effect of ill-will on the mind, an effect reflected also in the common parlance that someone is 'boiling with anger'. Ill-will and anger quite literally heat up the mind. Moreover, one who succumbs to this hindrance is in a predicament similar to boiling water, which needs to be handled with extreme care in order to avoid it spilling over and harming those who stand close to it.

Another simile compares the presence of the hindrance of ill-will in the mind to copper as a corruption of gold. Due to such corruption, the gold will be brittle and unfit for use by the goldsmith, as it has lost its malleability and radiance (SN V 92 and AN III 16). This image reveals the loss of workability of the mind due to the presence of ill-will. A similar idea underlies another image, in which a strangling fig encircles a tree, bends it and eventually splits it apart (SN V 96). Just as such a creeper weakens the tree it overgrows, so too the hindrance of ill-will, if it is allowed to overgrow the mind, weakens and eventually destroys wisdom.

In contrast, the mental condition when ill-will has at least temporarily been overcome is comparable to recovery from a physical illness (MN I 275). According to the *Samaṇamaṇḍika-sutta*, intentions related to ill-will cease completely with *jhāna* attainment (MN II 27). The *Visuddhimagga* explains that it is in particular the *jhāna* factor of "joy", *pīti*, which stands in direct opposition to ill-will (Vism 141).

3.2 The Arising and Consequences of Ill-will

A prominent cause for the arising of ill-will is unwise attention to the sign of irritation, *paṭighanimitta* (AN I 3). Once ill-will has arisen, the mind tends to return again and again to the particular issue, event or person that has occasioned the arising of ill-will. In this way, the "sign of irritation" can become quite literally the "nutriment", *āhāra*, for ill-will (SN V 64), in that it nourishes the continuity of ill-will.

Based on the presence of the "element of ill-will" in one's mind, *vyāpādadhātu*, perceptions related to ill-will arise, *vyāpādasaññā* (SN II 151). These in turn lead to intentions, desires, fevers and quests under the influence of ill-will, *vyāpādasaṅkappa, vyāpādacchanda, vyāpādapariḷāha, vyāpādapariyesanā*. The final results of this conditioned sequence are bound to be misdeeds by body, speech and mind, influenced by ill-will.

The presence of ill-will in the mind obstructs knowing what is beneficial for oneself and for others (AN III 63), and recalling what has been memorized even for a long time (SN V 122). According to the *Cūḷakammavibhaṅga-sutta*, ill-will and anger are the cause of being reborn ugly, or even of being reborn in hell (MN III 204). The future karmic results of ill-will reflect the effect that ill-will has even here and now. An angry face, distorted by the tension of ill-will, is inevitably an ugly

face, and one overwhelmed by ill-will is on fire within, not altogether different from the way ancient Indians imagined the conditions in some of the hell realms.

The *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* provides a complementary perspective on the karmic consequences of ill-will, as it indicates that, due to being free from anger and ill-will during previous existences, the Buddha was endowed with a beautiful complexion and a skin resembling gold (DN III 159). The degree to which the absence of ill-will can affect countenance is also reflected in a passage in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*. According to this passage, the debater Saccaka was rather surprised to find that, when being addressed offensively, the Buddha's skin would brighten and his countenance became clear (MN I 250).

Thus someone who does not react with ill-will and anger will not only be reborn endowed with beauty, but even be more beautiful here and now. The face of one who is forgiving, kind and patient, as illustrated in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*, will naturally become more beautiful.

However, beauty is not the main reason why one should avoid ill-will. A more serious consequence of being overwhelmed by ill-will is that one will do what one should not do and fail to do what should be done (AN II 67). The dire consequences of allowing ill-will to remain in the mind are that its influence leads to words and deeds driven by ill-will (AN I 262). This is comparable to a house whose roof is not properly thatched, a condition that will affect the peak, the roof beams and the walls of the house.

To withdraw into solitude in a forest will be of little benefit for someone who is still under the influence of ill-will (MN I 18). In fact, to meditate with the mind overwhelmed by the hindrance of ill-will is a form of 'mis-meditating', a way of practice that did not meet with the Buddha's approval (MN III

14). The repercussions of ill-will are such that they can even contribute to a gradual deterioration of living conditions in general. Thus, according to the *Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta*, it is only when beings decide to leave ill-will and other unwholesome actions and mental conditions behind that, after a long period of continual decline, living conditions in the world begin to improve again (DN III 74).

3.3 How to Overcome Ill-will

An important foundation for overcoming ill-will is moral conduct. By keeping the five precepts incumbent on a lay-follower of Buddhism one gives a gift of fearlessness, non-anger and non-ill-will to other beings, *abhayaṃ deti averaṃ deti avyāpajjhaṃ deti* (AN IV 246).

In order to overcome thoughts of ill-will, perceptions of ill-will, or the element of ill-will, one needs to simply develop thoughts of non-ill-will, perceptions of non-ill-will and the element of non-ill-will (AN III 446). To undertake this task, an important prerequisite is a clear recognition of the presence of ill-will in the mind. The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* describes such clear recognition as a first step of practice. This then leads to insight into what has caused the arising of this hindrance, insight into what will effect its removal, and insight into how a future arising of ill-will can be prevented (MN I 60).

The first aspect in the instruction given in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* − clear recognition of the presence of ill-will − is of considerable importance. Instead of immediately reacting, the task is to allow mindfulness the time and space to clearly recognize that ill-will is present in the mind, and to see what has caused its arising. It is only when this first step of clearly assessing the situation has been carried to its completion that removal of ill-will comes in its proper place.

This two-step approach is highlighted in the *Itivuttaka* as a characteristic quality of the Buddha's teaching, which requires first of all recognizing evil as evil, *pāpaṃ pāpakato passatha*, followed by overcoming it (It 33). Such overcoming, then, is the task of right effort, namely to arouse energy and strive in order to overcome any ill-will and prevent its re-arising (e.g. MN II 11).

Though the second step of removing ill-will should certainly not be neglected, by doing so too quickly one would miss an opportunity to develop experiential wisdom when ill-will arises in the mind. Since such wisdom will eventually lead to the total removal of ill-will, from a long-term perspective it is of considerable importance that the initial mindful observation of ill-will is given full space. This implies to clearly recognize how the presence of ill-will manifests, and ideally also understanding the conditions that have led to its arising. Such insight needs to be allowed the space and time to unfold its liberating potential before more active measures are taken.

For the actual removal of ill-will, the above-mentioned comparison of a mind free from ill-will to recovery from physical disease provides a helpful example (MN I 275). Together with the listing of ill-will as a bodily tie, *kāyagantha*, this draws attention to the bodily tension and quite literal the 'dis-ease' that the arising of ill-will and anger can bring about. Such bodily tension and the mental boiling up of ill-will naturally tend to augment each other. Thus, at times, this vicious circle can be slowed down already by just consciously relaxing the body and by taking a deep breath. Shortness of breath, clenching of teeth and tensing of shoulders are easily detectable bodily indicators of the presence of ill-will, and to consciously counteract them by relaxation can have remarkable effects on one's mental condition.

Intentional relaxation can also have substantial results if applied directly to the mind itself. Here the point is that ill-will inevitably involves a narrow perspective, usually a focussing on the irritating and displeasing aspect of a situation or a person at the exclusion of other aspects that do not reinforce the irritation. This narrow vision can escalate so much that, as described in the context of ill-will as a pathway of action, the only possible solution seems to be getting rid of the irritating person or object.

Here a conscious broadening of the scope of perception can go a long way in undermining the foundations of ill-will. The aspect of broadening the mind comes up explicitly in a description of how ill-will in regard to disagreeable sense objects leads to a narrow state of mind, *appiyarūpe rūpe vyāpajjati ... parittacetaso* (MN I 266). If, however, covetousness and ill-will are overcome, then the mind becomes broad and boundless, *abhijjhā pi vyāpādā pi ... tesaṃ pahānā aparittañca me cittaṃ bhavissati, appamāṇaṃ subhāvitaṃ* (MN II 262).

True broadening of the mind comes about through the development of loving kindness, *mettā*, whose meditative radiation is quite literally "boundless", *appamāṇa*, as well as being free from anger and ill-will, *avera* and *avyāpajjha* (e.g. DN I 251). Through the development of loving kindness, ill-will can indeed be removed, *mettaṃ ... bhāvayato yo vyāpādo so pahīyissati* (MN I 424). As a verse in the *Itivuttaka* indicates, for those who are under the influence of ill-will, who burn with the fire of anger, the way to extinguish this fire is through loving kindness (It 92-93). Loving kindness is in fact the antidote par excellence for ill-will, so much so that it is impossible for ill-will to invade and persist in a mind that has developed loving kindness (DN III 248).

Additional tools for overcoming ill-will include consciously ignoringe the negative qualities of a person that is experienced as irritating, and instead directing attention to whatever positive qualities can be found in him or her (AN III 186). In case one is unable to find anything positive, then the occasion has come for developing compassion, *karuṇā*, as a person bereft of any positive quality should indeed call up one's compassion and pity. In addition to loving kindness and compassion, equanimity can help to overcome irritation, or else trying to forget the issue that has caused irritation, or reflecting on the fact that all beings are the heirs of their own deeds (AN III 185).

In addition to loving kindness and reflection on the karmic consequences of one's deeds, the Pāli commentaries recommend practising wise reflection repeatedly, associating with good friends, and having suitable conversations as means for overcoming ill-will (Ps I 283). The reference to associating with good friends receives a complementary perspective in a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, which points out that those who are under the influence of ill-will tend to associate with others who have the same mental inclination (SN II 168). Hence associating with those who are free from ill-will will support one's own struggle against ill-will.

For one who has reached final liberation, ill-will has forever been left behind, and the Tathāgata is one who delights in the absence of ill-will (It 31). As the *Jīvaka-sutta* points out, the Buddha's establishment in loving kindness was well grounded indeed, since he had forever eradicated any defilement of the mind that might lead to ill-will (MN I 369).

"A monk who dwells in loving kindness,
And is devoted to the Buddha's teaching,
Shall attain the path of peace,
The happiness of the calming of [all] formations."

Mettāvihārī yo bhikkhu
pasanno Buddhasāsane
adhigacche padaṃ santaṃ
saṅkhārūpasamaṃ sukhaṃ.

(Dhp 368)

4. Sloth-and-torpor / *Thīnamiddha*

Sloth-and-torpor is the third in the standard listing of the five hindrances, those detrimental mental states singled out for their propensity to 'hinder' the proper functioning of the mind (DN I 246). The present essay will first survey the nature of this hindrance (4.1) and then turn to the removal of sloth-and-torpor (4.2).

4.1 The Nature of Sloth-and-torpor

The discourses indicate that the hindrance of sloth-and-torpor can arise due to discontent, boredom, laziness, overeating, and because of a depressed state of mind (SN V 64). The effect of the hindrance sloth-and-torpor can be illustrated with the example of a bowl full of water, used as a mirror in order to see the reflection of one's face (SN V 121and AN III 232). If the water in the bowl should be overgrown with moss, the natural reflecting ability of the water will be impaired. Similarly, if the mind is 'overgrown' with sloth-and-torpor, its natural ability to function properly will be impaired.

Additionally, the same image also depicts quite vividly that the long-term result of sloth-and-torpor is stagnation, similar to water overgrown by moss. In contrast to this predicament, to be free from sloth-and-torpor is like being released from a prison (MN I 275). This complementary simile reflects the degree to which sloth-and-torpor 'imprison' the mind.

The *Vibhaṅga*, the second and perhaps earliest work in the Pāli *Abhidhamma*, explains sloth-and-torpor to imply "inability" or "unreadiness" (Vibh 254). Similar to this aspect of inability, a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* characterizes a mind under the influence of sloth-and-torpor as "internally stuck", *ajjhattaṃ saṅkhittaṃ* (SN V 279).

Sloth-and-torpor, though counting as only one out of the five hindrances, in actual fact covers two distinct mental factors. This distinction is drawn in a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, which differentiates between sloth and torpor as single hindrances (SN V 110). These two distinct mental factors may have been subsumed under the heading of a single hindrance due to their similar effect on the mind.

The *Vibhaṅga* explains that while sloth, *thīna*, is a mental type of inability, *cittassa akalyatā*, torpor, *middha*, refers to its bodily counterpart, *kāyassa akalyatā* (Vibh 254). Torpor as a form of bodily inability is reflected in a verse in the *Dhammapada*. This verse relates overeating out of gluttony to the arising of torpor, *middha*, a deplorable condition comparable to a fat pig wallowing and lolling about (Dhp 325). Elsewhere the Pāli discourses depict someone who, after overeating, indulges in the pleasure of lying down and sleeping, *passasukha* and *seyyasukha*, and thus in the pleasure of torpor, *middhasukha* (DN III 238). A striking contrast to this is provided by a verse in the *Theragāthā*, according to which Anuruddha completely overcame torpor through adopting the ascetic practice of not lying down (Th 904).

This may have been an exceptional case, however, not representing the norm for *arahant*s in general. In fact, torpor as bodily fatigue can arise without being caused by overeating or any other form of improper indulgence. The *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* reports an occasion when the Buddha was challenged by a

contemporary debater for taking a nap in the afternoon. In reply, the Buddha clarified that his taking a rest should not be misinterpreted as a manifestation of delusion (MN I 250).

The *Peṭakopadesa* explicitly remarks that the bodily fatigue of an *arahant* should not be reckoned a hindrance (Peṭ 161). The *Milindapañha* lists torpor among those conditions that simply accompany the body and which are outside of the control of an *arahant* in general (Mil. 253). From this perspective, the case of Anuruddha would indeed seem to have been exceptional. The *Vimuttimagga* then includes torpor among types of derived matter (T XXXII 445c25, with a Tibetan counterpart in Skilling 1994: 189), a reckoning the *Visuddhimagga*, however, does not accept (Vism 450).

In sum, whereas *thīna* as mental sloth stands for conditions of boredom, lack of inspiration and interest, *middha* as torpor seems to have a more ambivalent nature, as sleepiness could be due to overeating, but may also simply come about as a natural condition that will even affect those who have otherwise gone beyond the influence of any of the five hindrances.

4.2 The Removal of Sloth-and-torpor

A prominent antidote to sloth-and-torpor, mentioned on frequent occasions in the Pāli discourses, is the development of "perception of light", *ālokasaññā*, together with mindfulness and clear comprehension (e.g. DN I 71). Some discourses associate the expression "perception of light" with a mind that is "open", *vivaṭa*, and "uncovered", *apariyonaddha*, by day and by night, and indicate that such "perception of light" will lead to knowledge and vision (DN III 223). This suggests the expression "perception of light" to refer to the development of mental clarity.

Such a way of understanding finds support in the *Vibhaṅga*, which glosses "perception of light" as a perception that is "open", *vivaṭa*, "pure", *parisuddha*, and "clean", *pariyodāta* (Vibh 254). The commentaries, however, take the expression "perception of light" more literally and suggest employing actual light to overcome this hindrance, by looking at the moon, for example, or at the sun (Ps I 284).

Such "perception of light" takes place with the aid of mindfulness and clear comprehension, which brings into play two qualities as a remedy against sloth-and-torpor that indeed lead to an increase of mental clarity. This is not the only role mindfulness has to play in relation to the hindrance of sloth-and-torpor. According to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, the tasks of mindfulness in relation to this hindrance ranges from clear recognition of the presence or absence of sloth-and-torpor to understanding what has lead to the arising of this hindrance, what will lead to its removal, and how a future arising of sloth-and-torpor can be prevented (MN I 60).

The *Aṅguttara-nikāya* dedicates an entire discourse to discussing the hindrance torpor, *middha*, offering a variety of remedies (AN IV 85). Initially, one could attempt to counter torpor by changing one's meditation subject, or else by reflecting on or reciting passages from the Buddha's teachings. Should this not work, one may pull the ears, massage the body, get up, sprinkle the eyes with water and look up at the sky. If torpor still persists, walking meditation should be practised.

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the hindrance sloth-and-torpor stands in direct opposition to the *jhāna* factor of initial mental application, *vitakka* (Vism 141). The intention of this explanation could be that the clear grasp of an object through initial mental application counteracts the lack of clarity and mental fogginess caused by sloth-and-torpor. Initial mental ap-

plication as a *jhāna* factor provides a directional and energizing input and could be understood to be an expression of the quality of energy. Energy is in fact the one of the seven factors of awakening, *bojjhaṅga*, which, according to the Pāli discourses, stands in direct opposition to sloth-and-torpor (SN V 104+105).

The need to energetically overcome and remove this particular hindrance should not be underestimated, since the presence of sloth-and-torpor in the mind obstructs understanding one's own good and that of others (AN III 63). Due to sloth-and-torpor, one does what one should not do and fails to do what should be done (AN II 67).

Being excessively affected by sloth-and-torpor is a factor indicating that a monk may be living the celibate life without real inner satisfaction (SN III 106). To withdraw into solitude in the forest will be of little benefit if one is still under the influence of sloth-and-torpor (MN I 18). Hence to meditate while the hindrance sloth-and-torpor pervades the mind is a form of mis-meditating (MN III 14). Being under the influence of sloth-and-torpor is to be under Māra's control (Ud 38). As long as sloth-and-torpor is present in the mind, liberation will remain out of reach (AN V 195).

The opposition between sloth-and-torpor and liberation finds a fitting illustration in the case of the monk Bhagu (Th 271-274). According to his own report, Bhagu had decided to go out of his dwelling because he was overwhelmed by torpor. His torpor must have been quite strong since, when stepping out, he stumbled and fell down. Getting up and collecting himself, he took to walking meditation. Continuing to practice walking meditation with firm determination, he was not only able to free himself from torpor and develop concentration, but

on that same occasion he carried his practice all the way through to liberation.

Hence the removal of sloth-and-torpor has considerable potential, and to properly understand this hindrance and the way to overcome it can yield remarkable results.

5. Restlessness-and-worry / *Uddhaccakukkucca*

Restlessness-and-worry comes as the fourth in the standard listing of the five hindrances that obstruct the meditative development of the mind. Just as in the case of sloth-and-torpor, the expression *uddhacca-kukkucca* actually covers two hindrances, one of which is restlessness, while the other is worry (SN V 110). The rationale for treating them together as a single hindrance may be the similar effect that restlessness and worry have on the mind.

In the present essay, I will at first examine restlessness (5.1), then worry (5.2), and finally turn to passages that are of relevance to both considered together as the hindrance of restlessness-and-worry (5.3).

5.1 Restlessness

Uddhacca is "restlessness" in the sense of mental agitation, distraction and excitement, and thus by its very nature is the opposite of mental calm and tranquillity.

Restlessness can arise through excessive striving. The discourses compare such a situation to a goldsmith who keeps blowing on gold that is placed on a fire, as a result of which the gold will get burnt (AN I 257). Here a less pushy approach would be the appropriate remedy, and perhaps also a less goal-oriented attitude. In fact, the discourses indicate explicitly that "desire" for progress on the path can be in excess, *atipaggahīta chanda,* and in such a case will cause restlessness (SN V 277).

The same is the case for excess of energy. Hence, even though desire for progress and energy are required for the development of the path, if they become too prominent in the mind the hindrance of restlessness will arise and thereby obstruct further progress. As long as restlessness remains, it will be impossible to reach the final goal (AN III 421).

The need for balance in this respect can be seen from the case of Soṇa, described in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. After putting forth excessive effort, Soṇa was in a state of depression because he had not progressed. In order to drive home the lesson that the all important middle path of balance gets lost with too pushy an attitude, the Buddha employed the imagery of a lute, an instrument with which Soṇa would have been familiar from his earlier life as a layman (AN III 375).

Though the strings of a lute need to be taut in order to produce sound, if they are over tight, the sound will become shrill. Just as the lute's strings need to be adjusted to a middle position between laxity and tension, similarly Soṇa had to find the middle point of balance between these two extremes in order to progress. In his case, this required giving up excessive striving and its resultant restlessness. After this clarification, Soṇa was soon enough able to reach the final goal, which earlier had eluded him due to his excessive striving.

A more mundane source for the arising of restlessness can be the speaking of provocative words (AN IV 87). Such words easily result in much talking and arguing, as a consequence of which restlessness will arise in the mind and concentration will be lost. Restlessness could also arise in relation to begging alms, as on receiving nothing because people have been too busy to notice that someone has come, a monk or a nun might become restless and wonder who caused a rift between them and their supporters (AN IV 87).

The presence of restlessness makes it difficult to develop the inspiration to visit noble ones and hear their teachings, and also to overcome a fault-finding disposition (AN V 148). Restlessness is a blemish to be avoided by one who dwells in forest seclusion (MN I 470); as to be obsessed by restlessness will cause decline in the teaching and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata (AN V 163). Hence a monastic should regularly reflect in order to ascertain if restlessness is present in the mind (AN V 93). If this is the case, a firm effort should be made to overcome it. A central means for overcoming restlessness is the practice of mental tranquillity, *samatha* (AN III 449).

Besides being one of the five hindrances, *uddhacca* is also the fourth of the five higher fetters (DN III 234). Since the five higher fetters are overcome during progress from non-return to *arahant*-ship, the total removal of the last and most subtle traces of restlessness will only take place when final liberation is attained.

A noteworthy usage of *uddhacca* occurs in the *Yuganaddha-sutta*, which refers to restlessness in its description of one of the ways to attain final liberation (AN II 157). According to this discourse, progress to liberation can take place starting with a situation where one's mind is under the influence of restlessness related to the *Dhamma*, *dhamm'uddhacca*. Once the mind settles down and becomes concentrated, the path will be experienced.

The commentary on this passage and the *Paṭisambhidhāmagga* explain that this description refers to the arising of illumination, *obhāsa*, one of the imperfections of insight (Mp III 143 and Paṭis II 100). Not understanding this to be an imperfection and failing to notice its impermanent nature leads to the arising of restlessness. An alternative interpretation is to take *dhamm'uddhacca* to stand for "mental distress brought on by eager-

ness to realize the *Dhamma*, a state of spiritual anxiety that sometimes can precipitate an instantaneous enlightenment experience" (Ñāṇaponika & Bodhi 2000: 295 note 69), such as apparently was the case with Bāhiya (Ud 8).

5.2 Worry

Due to its close relation to deeds and omissions, the theme of worry is a recurrent topic in the *Vinaya*. The background stories to numerous rules report that monks were experiencing worry in regard to certain actions, and would only undertake them after receiving explicit permission by the Buddha. Worry in this respect was apparently such a common phenomena that some monks deliberately would try to arouse worry in others. Hence a regulation had to be promulgated to stop such mischief (Vin IV 149). The relatively frequent arising of worry among monastics is also reflected in the circumstance that one of the qualifications for acting as a preceptor for other monks, or for giving dependence to junior monks, is an elder monk's ability to dispel worries in a rightful manner (AN V 72 and 73).

Not all worry, however, is something to be dispelled, since at times worry may be quite appropriate. Just as for those who worry about unnecessary things the influxes (*āsavā*) grow, so too the influxes grow in the case of those who do not worry about things that should be worried about (AN I 85). The worry that arose in the monk Sudinna after he had engaged in sex with his former wife was quite appropriate (Vin III 19), in fact it would have been better if worry had arisen earlier and prevented him from committing this deed. But even in regard to minor matters worry would be appropriate. Thus a monk was aroused by worry to approach the Buddha and make a formal confession that on an earlier occasion, when the Buddha had emphasized the importance of observing the precepts, this

monk had disapprovingly thought to himself that the Buddha was too exacting (AN I 237).

A verse in the *Sutta-nipāta* relates the removal of worry to the diligent practice of meditation in secluded spots (Sn 925). Another verse in the same collection mentions freedom from worry together with various aspects of restraint in regard to speech, which cover being free from anger, boasting and arrogance, as well as the use of moderate words (Sn 850). Though these verses do not establish an explicit relation between the removal of worry and these other qualities, the fact that they are presented together is suggestive. One would indeed expect that the inner certitude gained through meditating in seclusion and through observing such restraint in regard to speech would go a long way in preventing the arising of worry.

At times, worry can also stand for uncertainty in regard to the teachings. This is the case in a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, which reports how the Buddha visited a monk and inquired whether that monk had any worries (SN IV 46; cf. also SN III 120; SN III 125 and SN IV 48). The monk replied that he indeed had considerable worries, but clarified that nothing blameworthy in regard to ethics had happened for which he would have felt regret. Questioned on the source of his worry, the monk then asked for clarification on some subtler aspect of the teaching. In such instances "worry", *kukkucca*, is no longer related to moral regret, but instead stands for a type of worry that is concerned with the wish to properly understand the teachings, a case perhaps similar to the above mentioned "restlessness" related to the teachings, *dhamm'uddhacca*.

5.3 Restlessness-and-worry

A telling illustration of the agitating effect of restlessness-and-worry on the mind describes how one might attempt to see

the reflection of one's own face in a bowl filled with water that is stirred by wind. The wind creates ripples and waves, making it impossible to properly see the reflection of one's face (SN V 123 and AN III 232). Similarly, the hindrance of restlessness-and-worry stirs the mind and causes such mental ripples and waves that to see and know according to reality becomes impossible. Moreover, just as water stirred by wind may easily overspill its container, similarly restlessness-and-worry can easily 'overspill', affecting anyone in the vicinity with an atmosphere of agitation and unsettledness.

A rather stark depiction of the effect that restlessness-and-worry can have on one's mental freedom is provided in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, which compares being under the influence of this particular hindrance to slavery, a condition where one is utterly dependent on others and unable to go where one would like (DN I 72). This image draws out the degree to which the hindrance of restlessness-and-worry can control the mind and keep it in its grip, throwing it into endless activity and agitation, thereby making it dependent on externals as inner stability has been lost.

Another simile compares the presence of the five hindrances to various metals that corrupt the purity of gold. Here restlessness-and-worry corresponds to lead, whose presence will cause the gold to become corrupted, brittle and unfit for being employed by a goldsmith, as it has lost its malleability and radiance (SN V 92 and AN III 16). In a similar way, due to the influence of restlessness-and-worry the mind becomes unfit for work. Once restlessness-and-worry are present in the mind, one becomes unable to recognize one's own benefit or that of others, and also unable to keep in mind even what has been memorized for a long time (SN V 123).

To overcome the hindrance of restlessness-and-worry requires developing a mind that is internally calm, *ajjhattaṃ vūpasanta citta* (e.g. DN I 71). The hindrance of restlessness-and-worry thus stands in particular opposition to the awakening factor of tranquillity, *passaddhisambojjhaṅga* (SN V 104). Other awakening factors whose development is recommendable when the mind is restless are concentration and equanimity (SN V 114). In this way, restlessness can gradually be overcome, similar to throwing water and earth on a great fire in order to extinguish it.

The need to remove restlessness-and-worry can arise even at a comparatively high level of development. This can be seen in a discourse that records an instruction given by Sāriputta to Anuruddha. The latter had complained to Sāriputta that in spite of being in the possession of unshaken energy, well-established mindfulness, bodily tranquillity and mental one-pointedness, he was unable to reach liberation from the influxes, *āsavā* (AN I 282). In reply, Sāriputta dryly remarked that Anuruddha's obsession with having energy, mindfulness, tranquillity and one-pointedness of mind was simply a manifestation of restlessness, and his concern about not having reached the destruction of the influxes was simply worry. Being helped to recognize how restlessness and worry were obstructing him in this way, Anuruddha was soon enough able to accomplish the decisive breakthrough to final liberation.

6. Doubt / *Vicikicchā*

Doubt is a mental obstruction in regard to the development of tranquillity as well as of liberating insight. The role of doubt as an obstruction to the development of deeper states of concentration is reflected in its inclusion as the fifth among the five hindrances (e.g. DN I 246). The debilitating effect of doubt in relation to liberating insight, its 'binding' force to *saṃsāra*, finds its expression in the fact that one of the three fetters that are to be eradicated with stream-entry is the fetter of doubt (e.g. MN I 9). These two aspects of the 'hindering' and 'binding' forces of doubt underline the importance of properly understanding the nature of this particular mental condition and the ways to overcome it.

In the present essay, I will at first examine the nature of doubt, especially through relying on various similes related to the term (6.1). Then I will turn to the distinct Buddhist approach to overcome doubt through developing the mental quality of investigation (6.2).

6.1 The Nature of Doubt

The nature of doubt has been illustrated in the discourses with the help of various similes. One of these introduces doubt as the seventh army of Māra, the Evil One (Sn 437). Those who successfully do battle with this army and overcome doubt are, according to the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, comparable to someone who safely crosses a dangerous desert without loss (DN I 73).

Similar to the desert image, doubt in relation to the teacher, the *Dhamma*, the *Saṅgha* and the training is reckoned to be a "barrenness of the mind", *cetokhila* (MN I 101). The theme of travelling that underlies the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* simile of crossing a desert recurs in a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, which illustrates the nature of doubt with the example of a man who stands at the junction of a forked path, *dvidhāpatha* (SN III 108; see also MN I 144), in need of being told which path to take.

The images of having to cross a dangerous desert and of being unable to decide on the right path disclose the insecurity and vacillation caused by doubt, and the uncertainty about the proper course to be undertaken. The desert imagery and the idea of a barrenness of the mind add to this the aspect of an almost sterile and infertile condition, since due to the presence of doubt the mind becomes unproductive and even profound teachings are like seeds that fall on stony ground.

The lack of clarity and vagueness that underlies the image of a forked path recurs more explicitly in a simile that compares the effect of each of the five hindrances to attempting to see the reflection of one's own face in a bowl filled with water. Here doubt is equivalent to using a bowl that is placed in the dark and filled with turbid and muddy water (SN V 123 and AN III 233). Obviously a bowl of water in such condition will be incapable of accurately reflecting the true condition of one's face, just as a mind under the influence of doubt is unable to accurately know and see the true nature of reality.

The image of turbid and muddy water as an illustration of the clouding and blurring effect that doubt has on the mind finds a counterpart in another simile that compares the five hindrances to various metals that corrupt the purity of gold. In the context of this simile, doubt corresponds to silver. The presence of

silver will render gold brittle and unfit for use by the goldsmith, since by being mixed with silver it loses its malleability (SN V 92 and AN III 16).

As a hindrance, doubt can manifest in relation to internal as well as external phenomena (SN V 110). Moreover, doubt can arise in regard to the past, the present, or the future (DN III 217; cf. also SN IV 327).

The underlying tendency responsible for the fetter of doubt is already present in a new-born baby, even though an infant would not even know things about which doubt could arise (MN I 433). Hence to overcome and remove doubt requires working against a deeply ingrained tendency in the mind.

Not all forms of doubt, however, are blameworthy. In fact, according to some discourses the Buddha at times approved of doubt, telling his auditors that they were entertaining doubt in regard to matters that are indeed perplexing, *kaṅkhaniye ca pana te ṭhāne vicikicchā uppannā* (SN IV 350; SN IV 399; AN I 189). According to the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*, even during the last moments before his passing away the Buddha encouraged the assembled monks to voice any doubt they had, so that it could be clarified as long as he was still alive (DN II 155). Just prior to that statement, the Buddha had resolved the doubts of the wanderer Subhadda (DN II 149). Thus, although the arising of doubt is an obstruction to deeper concentration and insight, it can have its rightful place when it leads to investigating matters that should be investigated.

6.2 Doubt and Investigation

Giving unwise attention to phenomena that cause doubt is the main factor or 'nutriment' that leads to the manifestation of doubt (SN V 103). "Unwise attention", *ayoniso manasikāra*, is in fact the condition par excellence for the arising of doubt

(AN I 4). Its opposite, "wise attention" or perhaps "penetrative attention", *yoniso manasikāra*, should be directed to distinguishing between what is wholesome and unwholesome, what is blameable and blameless, what is inferior and superior, what is dark and bright. To understand this crucial difference constitutes the antidote or "denourishment", *anāhāra*, for doubt (SN V 106).

The above shows that the hindrance of doubt is closely related to an inability to clearly recognize what is skilful or wholesome, *kusala*, and what is unskilful or unwholesome, *akusala*. This is noteworthy in so far as the central factor or 'nutriment' for the awakening factor of investigation-of-phenomena, *dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga*, is precisely wise attention directed to what is wholesome and unwholesome, what is blameable and blameless, what is inferior and superior, what is dark and bright (SN V 104).

This contrast between the hindrance of doubt and the awakening factor of investigation-of-phenomena, where the same factor that overcomes the former is responsible for the development of the latter, is quite significant. It reveals that in early Buddhism doubt is not to be overcome through faith or belief alone. Rather, to overcome and counter doubt requires a process of investigation, and due to the clarity and understanding that arises through such investigation, doubt is dispelled.

According to the detailed treatment of the awakening factors given in the *Ānāpānasati-sutta*, the awakening factor of investigation-of-phenomena arises based on the previous development of mindfulness (MN III 85). This suggests that the type of investigation required to overcome doubt stands in close relation to mindfulness, in the sense of 'investigating' with awareness the true nature of 'phenomena'. In fact, *satipaṭṭhāna* is explicitly qualified to be a "straightforward" and "direct"

path, *ekāyano maggo* (MN I 55), an expression explained in the commentary to imply that *satipaṭṭhāna* is not a forked path, *eka-maggo ayaṃ, na dvedhā-patha-bhūto* (Ps I 229). Thus the development of mindfulness would indeed seem the appropriate method for overcoming the forked path of doubt.

Another facet of the same awakening factor is a more theoretical type of inquiry. This can be seen from the definition given in the same *Ānāpānasati-sutta*, according to which the development of the awakening factor of investigation-of-phenomena, *dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga*, requires examining with wisdom "that *Dhamma*", *taṃ dhammaṃ paññāya pavicinati pavicarati parivīmaṃsaṃ āpajjati* (MN III 85). The use of the singular form suggests that the inquiry is concerned with *dhamma* in the sense of the "teaching" or the "truth".

The procedure to settle doubt through inquiry is described in several discourses, which depict how junior monks approach experienced elders to get clarification of their questions in order to remove their doubts (e.g. MN I 223). A case that well illustrates how inquiry can lead to overcoming doubt is described in the *Sakkapañha-sutta*. This discourse reports how the king of the Heaven of the Thirty-three, Sakka, approached the Buddha with a set of questions during what appears to have been their first personal meeting (DN II 269). After receiving a series of clarifying replies to his queries from the Buddha, Sakka proclaimed that he had overcome and removed his doubts, *tiṇṇā m'ettha kaṅkhā, vigatā kathaṃkathā* (DN II 283). The discourse concludes by revealing that Sakka's removal of doubt had been thorough indeed, as he had attained stream-entry while listening to the Buddha (DN II 288).

The role of theoretical inquiry and understanding for the removal of doubt is reflected in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, which indicates that to overcome doubt, *kaṅkhaṃ vita-*

rati, is a benefit to be expected when one listens to the *Dhamma* (AN III 248). A specific instance for this potential is the *Sampasādanīya-sutta*, which concludes by noting that its treatment is of particular benefit for overcoming doubt in regard to the Buddha (DN III 116).

Familiarity with the *Dhamma* will even be of benefit in a future life, since one will recognize the teachings if one comes across them again without hesitation, just as someone who hears the sound of a drum or a conch would have no doubt or uncertainty about the nature of the sound just heard (AN II 185).

The need to remove doubt in relation to *Vinaya* matters appears to have been the rationale for the title given to the commentary on the monastic rules, the "Dispeller of Doubt", *Kaṅkhavitaraṇī*. The degree to which matters related to *Vinaya* might lead to the arising of doubts can also be seen from the name of the monk Kaṅkhārevata, "Revata the doubter", who apparently was given this nick-name because he had been greatly worried and concerned about properly maintaining ethical conduct (Ud-a 314). Kaṅkhārevata was successful in settling his doubts for good, as a discourse in the *Udāna* reports him seated in meditation, reviewing his own purification through overcoming doubt, *kaṅkhāvitaraṇavisuddhi* (Ud 60).

As this reference shows, the removal of *kaṅkhā* − a synonym to *vicikicchā* − is not only a matter of relevance in relation to *Vinaya*, but also in a more general sense, reflected in the fact that it constitutes a distinct stage in the series of purifications that lead up to liberation (MN I 147).

With stream-entry doubt is eradicated for good, *kaṅkhā pahīnā* (SN III 203), and the stream-entrant can be qualified as one who has overcome doubt, *tiṇṇavicikicchā* (DN I 110). This removal takes place at the moment of stream-entry itself (AN I

242 and Sn 231), when the deathless element is seen and realized through wisdom (SN V 221). Such direct realization is described in the discourses as the arising of the dustless and stainless eye of the *Dhamma*, due to which the stream-entrant sees, attains, understands and fathoms the *Dhamma*. Having removed doubt and overcome perplexity the stream-entrant has gained intrepidity and become independent of others in regard to the teacher's dispensation (e.g. MN I 380).

Only once doubt has been overcome in this way, will it be possible to eradicate passion, anger and delusion (AN V 147). Other advantages of overcoming doubt are that one will meet deadly disease with composure (AN II 175), and that one will be able to live in secluded spots in a forest wilderness without fear (MN I 18).

Based on the total removal of doubt through the experience of stream-entry, a noble disciple is endowed with unwavering confidence or faith, *aveccappasāda* (SN V 357). Coming back to a point already made above, faith and confidence, instead of being required to overcome doubt, are rather the result of the successful removal of doubt through investigation.

7. Feeling / *Vedanā*

"Feeling" or "sensation", *vedanā*, is the second of the five aggregates of clinging and the seventh link in the standard depiction of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda* (the link that leads to the arising of craving). The role of feelings in these two contexts reflects the importance of *vedanā* in the early Buddhist analysis of reality. In fact, according to a dictum found in several discourses, all phenomena converge on feeling, *vedanāsamosaraṇā sabbe dhammā* (AN IV 339; AN V 107). Hence an appraisal of feeling and its implications is of considerable importance for an understanding of early Buddhism in general and of the path to liberation in particular.

In the present essay, I will first of all examine the nature of feelings in general (7.1). Next I will turn in some detail to the distinction between bodily and mental types of feelings (7.2), followed by exploring the relation of feelings to karmic retribution (7.3) and to the formation of views (7.4).

7.1 The Nature of Feelings

The term *vedanā* is derived from the root √*vid*, whose range of meaning covers both "to feel" and "to know". *Vedanā* can thus be understood to represent the affective aspect of the process of knowing, the 'how' of experiencing, so to say. While *vedanā* has a strong conditioning impact on emotions, *vedanā* does not include emotion in its range of meanings. In the thought world of the early discourses, the concept of 'emotion' would perhaps find its closest Pāli counterpart in *citta.* In con-

trast, *vedanā* simply refers to feelings as one of the building blocks of such complex phenomena as emotions.

As such, *vedanā* stands in an intimate relationship with the cognitive input provided through "perception", *saññā*, since what one feels, one perceives, *yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti* (MN I 293). According to the standard definition given in the discourses, feeling 'feels', in the sense that it feels such affective tones as pleasure, displeasure and hedonic neutrality, *sukha, dukkha, adukkhamasukha* (SN III 86).

The basic distinction between pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings can be expanded further by combining this triad with each of the six senses, by distinguishing between feelings that are related to the household life and those that are related to renunciation, and by taking into account if feelings manifest in the past, present or future. In this way, we arrive at a total count of one-hundred-and-eight types of feelings (SN IV 232). Such different modes of analysis are, however, merely complementary perspectives on the phenomenon feeling, and none of them should be grasped dogmatically as the only right way of considering feelings (MN I 398).

In addition to analysing feelings into different types, the discourses illustrate the nature of feeling with a range of similes. One of these similes indicates that the different types of feelings are like winds in the sky, which come from different directions and can at times be dusty, hot or cold, mild or strong (SN IV 218). This imagery illustrates the somewhat accidental character of feelings, whose nature is to manifest in ways that are often out of one's control. The simile of the winds in the sky thus highlights that just as it is meaningless to contend with the vicissitudes of the weather, similarly, the arising of unwanted feelings is best borne with patience.

Another simile compares feelings to various types of visitors that come to a guesthouse from any of the four directions (SN IV 219). Feelings are similar to such visitors, they come and go, hence no need to become agitated and obsessed with the particular feeling that might have manifested at present, as soon enough this internal 'visitor' will go as well.

The ephemeral nature of feelings, already alluded to in the image of visitors that come and go, becomes more prominent in another simile that compares feelings to bubbles on the surface of water during rain (SN III 141). On investigating this matter, an onlooker would soon come to the conclusion that these bubbles are insubstantial and without any essence. Feelings, in whatever way they appear, are similarly insubstantial and without any essence. Just like a bubble, they will manifest only to disappear right away, thereby revealing their utterly ephemeral and insubstantial nature.

The insubstantial nature of feelings comes up again in another simile, which compares grasping feeling as a self or as belonging to a self to a man who is carried along by a mountain river and tries to grasp the grass that grows on the river bank. The grass will tear off and break due to his grasping, and the man will be unable to extricate himself from the current of the river in this way (SN III 137).

Insubstantial and void as they are, feelings are simply the product of conditions (SN II 38). Several similes highlight how feeling depends on contact. The affective tone of feeling is the product of the type of contact on which it is based, comparable to heat that is produced when two fire-sticks are rubbed against each other (SN IV 215). Once the two fire-sticks are separated the heat ceases, just as when contact ceases, the respective feeling will also cease.

Again, the radiance of a lamp is the product of oil, wick and flame. Due to the impermanent nature of these three, the radiance has to be impermanent as well. In the same way, feelings are the product of contact through any of the six sense-doors, therefore they must be as impermanent as the sense-doors themselves (MN III 273). Or else, the shadow of a tree is the product of the root, the trunk, the branches and the foliage of the tree. Given that these are impermanent, the shadow necessarily must be impermanent. The same applies to feelings, which are the product of contacting the objects of the senses and thus share their impermanent nature (MN III 274).

Painful feelings in particular are comparable to a bottomless abyss, an abyss deeper than the unfathomable depth of the ocean. The reason for this is that worldlings react to painful feelings with sorrow and lamentation, thereby perpetuating their experience of suffering (SN IV 206).

The *Salla-sutta* explains that by reacting with aversion to painful feelings, a worldling is as if shot by two arrows: in addition to the bodily experience of pain, the arising of aversion causes the affliction of mental agony and distress (SN IV 208). Being thus immersed in bodily and mental pain, the worldling knows no other way out but to search for some form of sensual pleasure as an escape from the painful experience.

The experience of pain leads to ever greater bondage if one gives fuel to the underlying tendency to aversion when reacting to pain, to the underlying tendency to passion through yearning for sensual pleasure, and to the underlying tendency to ignorance due to not attending to the true nature of feelings.

In contrast to this predicament, the noble disciple does not react to pain but simply bears it with composure. For this reason, only a single arrow afflicts him or her, and aversion to the pain will not arise, nor yearning for sensual pleasures as a way

to escape from pain. In this way, the experience of painful feelings leads to insight and the bondage to feelings diminishes.

7.2 Bodily and Mental Feelings

In addition to providing this instructive imagery on how to handle pain, the *Salla-sutta*'s distinction between being afflicted merely by the single arrow of bodily feelings and being the victim of the additional arrow of mental feelings is of relevance to an understanding of the distinction between bodily and mental feelings in general.

The notion of 'bodily feelings' may at first seem puzzling, since feelings are by definition mental and related to the mind, *cetasikā dhammā, cittapaṭibaddhā* (MN I 301). For this reason, feelings are part of "name", *nāma*, in the context of an exposition of name-and-form, *nāma-rūpa* (MN I 53).

Therefore, to speak of a 'bodily feeling' must refer to the source from which such feeling has arisen, namely the body, not to the nature of the feeling itself, which by definition has to be a mental phenomenon. This much would follow from the exposition in the *Salla-sutta*, whose purpose is to clarify that, in addition to the painful feelings that may arise due to bodily affliction, the second dart of affliction manifests due to feelings that originate because of the mental reaction to bodily pain.

The distinction between bodily and mental feelings is thus a mode of analysis that aims at the sense-door based on which feeling arises. The same mode of analysis may alternatively take into account all sense-doors and distinguish feelings into six types, covering those that arise based on contact by way of the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind (SN III 60).

Yet, does this mean that the experience of feelings is entirely mental and bears no relation to the body? This does not seem to be the case. In fact, common experience indicates that the actual experience of pleasant or painful feeling involves the body as well as the mind. Joy may manifest as raising of the hair and goose pimples, just as displeasure may show its effects through bodily tension and facial expression. Again, obtaining or losing desirable objects can affect the heart beat and blood circulation, or else intense feelings can cause faster breathing, etc.

In the listing of the five aggregates, feelings are placed right after the body and before the other mental aggregates. This positioning may well reflect the intermediate role that feelings have within the context of subjective experience. Due to whatever sense-door a pleasant or painful feeling may have arisen, its actual experience will affect the body as well as the mind.

Several discourses in fact reveal aspects of the bodily repercussions of feelings. Thus the *Kāyagatāsati-sutta* depicts how the pleasant feelings of deeper concentration experience suffuse the whole "body", *kāya* (MN III 92), a description that conveys the sense of one's entire being, body and mind, being immersed in pleasure and bliss.

The effect of painful feeling on the body is reflected in passages that describe the Buddha rebuking a monk. As a result of such a rebuke, the monk sits in dismay with shoulders drooping and his head hanging down (e.g. MN I 132). Clearly here the mental evaluation of the words just heard has caused the arising of feelings that, in addition to being experienced in the mind as dismay and perhaps shame, manifest bodily to such an extent that the whole posture is affected.

Feelings can thus be seen as an intermediary between body and mind, having a conditioning effect in both directions. One

aspect of this intermediary role is that whatever happens in the body is mentally felt through the medium of feelings, while the other aspect is that the affective tone of mental processes influences the body through the medium of feelings. The actual experience of feeling thus usually involves body and mind. An exception is the attainment of the immaterial spheres, where the bodily component of feeling disappears. With such types of experience the affective variety of feeling similarly disappears, as during these attainments − or else when reborn in the corresponding realms − only neutral feelings are experienced. In the normal living situation of the average human being, however, the experience of feeling involves the body as well as the mind.

In the language of the early discourses, the bodily and mental aspect of feelings are often considered together, such as when *sukha* or *dukkha vedanā* are defined as comprising bodily as well as mentally felt experience, *yaṃ kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā ... vedayitaṃ* (MN I 302). In the context of an exposition of experience from the perspective of the five affective faculties, *indriya*, the terms *sukha* and *dukkha* are, however, only used for feelings arisen from the body, *kāyasamphassaja*. Feelings that originate from the mind, *manosamphassaja*, are treated under the headings *somanassa* and *domanassa* (SN V 209). This mode of presentation dominates the analysis of feelings in the *Abhidhamma* and the commentaries.

According to an examination of feelings undertaken in the *Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha*, *sukha* and *dukkha* are only experienced in relation to the body sense-door, whereas the other sense-doors of eyes, ears, nose and tongue are invariably associated with neutral feelings, while the mind is associated with *somanassa* and *domanassa* type of feelings (Abhidh-s 2). Occurrences of *sukha* and *dukkha* in the early discourses, how-

ever, often function as umbrella terms for any feeling of the corresponding affective tone and need not stand for feelings arisen from the bodily sense-door alone.

In addition to analysing feelings into bodily and mental types, the discourses also distinguish between worldly and unworldly feelings, *sāmisa* and *nirāmisa* (MN I 59). The rationale behind this distinction is to draw attention to the relation of feelings to underlying tendencies, *anusaya*. Worldly types of feelings tend to activate the underlying tendencies to passion, aversion and ignorance. Unworldly types of feelings, such as the joy or the equanimity of deep concentration, or the sadness of not yet having reached liberation, do not activate these underlying tendencies (MN I 303). A similar perspective underlies the distinction into feelings related to the household life and those that are related to renunciation, *gehasita* and *nekkhammasita* (MN III 217).

Another two-fold analysis of feelings distinguishes between feelings with and without affliction, *savyābajjha* and *avyābajjha* (MN I 389). This perspective is in particular related to the issue of karma and rebirth, since due to the afflictive nature of one's volitions and deeds, one eventually has to face afflictive feelings as retribution. While rebirth in hell is felt as an entirely painful and unpleasant experience, rebirth in heaven will be felt as entirely pleasant and agreeable (MN I 74). Rebirth as an animal involves mainly painful experiences, whereas with rebirth as a human being pleasantly felt experiences prevail.

7.3 Feelings and Karmic Retribution

In regard to the relationship between karma and feelings (see also de Silva 1988), a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* clarifies that it would not be correct to assume that the retribution of a deed will be felt in a way that exactly corresponds to the

nature of the deed (AN I 249). Such an assumption would result in determinism and undermine the possibility of successful spiritual practice. Rather, the retribution to be felt depends on a range of circumstances.

According to a simile given to clarify this point, the same amount of salt will have quite a different effect when being thrown into a small cup of water or into a large river. While in the first case the water will become undrinkable, in the second case the salt will not affect the drinkability of the water. Similarly, the experiences that are to be felt in retribution for a particular deed may vary considerably, depending on the overall nature and the degree of mental development and purity of the person who earlier committed the deed.

An example for this principle is the case of the brigand Aṅgulimāla, who by going forth and becoming an *arahant* was able to avert the prospect of prolonged suffering in hell in retribution for his former evil deeds (MN II 104). Yet, in spite of his remarkable progress and personality change, he could not entirely avoid retribution, which affected him in the form of being physically attacked and beaten when going for alms.

That is, though the intensity of retribution to be felt varies according to a set of conditions, retribution as such cannot be avoided (Dhp 127). A deed whose retribution is to be felt cannot be changed into one whose retribution will not be felt at all (MN II 221), only the intensity of the retribution can be influenced. Hence the painful results of former deeds will touch even an *arahant*, as in the case of Aṅgulimāla.

A similar case is found in the *Udāna*, which describes a monk seated in meditation and experiencing painful feelings as a result of former deeds, *purāṇakammavipākajaṃ dukkhaṃ* (Ud 21). The commentary explains that this monk was also an *arahant* (Ud-a 165). Judging from the commentarial explana-

tion, this monk, too, would have been experiencing a remnant of retribution for former deeds. Being an *arahant*, he bore the pain without generating the second arrow of mental affliction.

Though the experience of feelings may often be related to former deeds, karma is not the only cause for the arising of feelings. As the discourses clarify, feelings could also manifest due to bodily disorders and imbalances, due to a change of climate, due to careless behaviour, or due to being attacked by another (SN IV 230). Therefore, it is not possible to categorically proclaim that the experience of happiness or pain is due to oneself, or else that it is due to another. The correct position is rather that the experience of feeling is the dependently arisen product of contact (SN II 38). Hence it is meaningless to inquire due to whom feelings arise, or else to query who is the one that feels, *ko vediyati* (SN II 13).

7.4 Feelings and Views

The notion of the one who feels and experiences the results of former deeds can in fact easily lead to mistaken notions of a self (MN I 8; see also MN I 258). The *Mahānidāna-sutta* traces three main modes in which notions of a self can arise in relation to feelings (DN II 66; see also Bodhi 1984). The three are: to identify feelings as the self, to consider the self to be without feelings, or to assume that it is the self that feels, in the sense of being subject to feelings.

In the first instance, the impermanent and conditioned nature of feelings would imply that the self is similarly impermanent and conditioned, an untenable notion. In the case of the second and third proposal, the problem arises that in the absence of any feeling, the notion "I am", *asmi*, or the notion "I am this", *ayam aham asmi*, will not arise at all. The argument in the latter two cases shows how closely the experience of feeling is

bound up with a sense of identity. If feeling were to be removed, the very point of reference required for self-notions would disappear as well.

Feelings are not only the breeding ground for self-notions, but are also intrinsically related to the genesis of views in general. The *Brahmajāla-sutta* relates the Buddha's transcendence of the obsession with views, prevalent among some of his contemporaries, to his penetrative insight into the true nature of feelings (DN I 17). From his perspective, these various views were merely the result of being under the influence of feelings and of lacking vision and knowledge, thereby succumbing to the grip of craving and becoming subject to worry and agitation (DN I 40).

The point behind this perspective on the process of view-formation is that often enough logic and thought serve merely to rationalize already existing likes and dislikes. Due to the arising of pleasant or unpleasant feelings, thoughts and associations are often coloured and influenced, resulting in a strong conditioning impact on views and opinions that only too often is not noticed.

The conditioning impact of feelings on experience and reactions is the central theme of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*, which highlights that craving, the main culprit for the *saṃsāri*c predicament, arises due to feeling. Hence insight is required at this junction, at the transition from feeling to craving. The development of such insight will be taken up in more detail in the next essay on contemplation of feelings.

One who has reached the destruction of craving through full liberation has gone beyond the controlling power of feelings as well. Being devoid of passion towards any feeling, he or she has become a *vedagū*, a knower of feelings as well as a knower

of the highest knowledge, *sabbavedanāsu vītarāgo sabbaṃ vedam aticca vedagū so* (Sn 529).

8. Contemplation of feelings / *Vedanānupassanā*

Due to the conditioning role of *vedanā* on craving, which constitutes an all-important junction in the twelve-link chain of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*, contemplation of feelings and of their conditioning impact on subsequent mental reactions has a central place in the early Buddhist analysis of reality. As highlighted by Ñāṇaponika (1983: 5), contemplation of feeling holds the intriguing potential of "breaking the chain of suffering at its weakest link".

In the present essay, I will first explore the analysis of feelings given in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* (8.1), followed by turning to the relationship between feelings and mental reactions (8.2) and to the potential of contemplating feelings (8.3). In the final part, I will examine feelings and impermanence (8.4), and investigate the significance of *dukkha* (8.5).

8.1 The Analysis of Feelings

According to the instructions given in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, contemplation of feeling requires clear awareness of the affective tone of any feeling as to whether it is "pleasant", *sukha*, "unpleasant", *dukkha*, or "neutral", *adukkhamasukha* (MN I 59). This basic division of feeling into three types is then to be further developed by distinguishing between "worldly" and "unworldly" manifestations of feelings, *sāmisa* and *nirāmisa*. In accordance with a mode of practice that is applied to any object of *satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of feelings comprises

internal and external feelings, *ajjhatta / bahiddhā*, and focuses on their arising and passing away, *samudaya / vaya*, with the aim of dwelling independently and without clinging to anything, *anissito ca viharati na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*.

These rather succinct instructions cover considerable ground in the field of insight. The first step envisaged in the *satipaṭṭhāna* training scheme for contemplation of feelings is to clearly recognize the affective tone of present experience, and to stop at the bare experience of feeling itself, without giving room to any reaction.

Having stopped at the bare feeling itself, the experience of feelings should be observed from the perspective of their affective nature, without getting involved with the individual nature and characteristics of whatever feeling may have manifested at present, whether this be, for example, 'feeling an itch', or perhaps 'feeling thrilled', or whatever else. Instead of getting carried away by the individual content of felt experience, awareness should be directed to the general character of experience in terms of its three possible feeling tones.

The rationale behind this distinction of feelings into three affective types in terms of being pleasant, unpleasant or neutral can be understood in the light of the *Mahānidāna-sutta*, which points out that these three types of feeling are mutually exclusive (DN II 66). That is, at the time of experiencing one of these three, one does not experience any of the other two.

The implication of this dictum is that the ability to feel is not a compact unit, not something stable that at times feels pleasure and at other times displeasure. Instead, feelings are a process that consists of a series of mutually exclusive moments of felt experience. Hence the notion of an 'I' that feels or is identical with feeling turns out to be a thoroughly mistaken assumption. In this way, the distinction introduced during this

first step of contemplation of feeling has considerable potential for bringing home the truth of not-self, *anattā.*

The next stage of practice, then, combines awareness of the affective tone of experience with mindfulness directed to its ethical context, expressed in terms of the distinction between worldly and unworldly feelings. The purpose behind this distinction is to draw awareness to the all-important relationship of feelings to the arising of wholesome or unwholesome mental reactions.

8.2 Feelings and Mental Reactions

A discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* approaches this topic from the perspective of the underlying tendencies, the *anusaya*s. This discourse explains that in relation to pleasant feeling the underlying tendency to passion should be abandoned; in relation to unpleasant feeling the underlying tendency to aversion should be abandoned; and in relation to neutral feeling the tendency to delusion should be abandoned (SN IV 205). The same discourse emphasizes that the activation of the underlying tendencies is in each case related to a lack of clearly knowing the respective feeling, *vedanam appajānato*. This discourse thereby uses precisely the same vocabulary as employed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta'*s description of contemplation of feeling, which enjoins to clearly know the feeling that is felt at present, '... *vedanaṃ vediyāmī 'ti pajānāti* (MN I 59).

This parallelism makes it clear that the antidote required in regard to the activation of the underlying tendencies is mindful observation of the nature of any feeling that has arisen. Developing mindfulness in this way has an intriguing potential of becoming aware and eventually even stopping the reaction to any feeling even before this reaction has started.

Contemplation of feeling needs to be undertaken comprehensively and continuously in order to eventually be able to nip the reaction in the bud, accomplished through clear awareness of the impending onset of unwholesome thoughts and emotions at their point of origin in *vedanā*. Here a special effort is required for contemplating feelings even when the mind is carried off by sensual fantasies, thoughts of aversion, or vain imaginings. Feelings arisen at such times are obviously worldly types of feeling, and to wisely contemplate them is the very means for breaking through their conditioning impact on the mind.

The need for continuity of practice is also implicit in the above-mentioned *Saṃyutta-nikāya* discourse, which continues by indicating that practice should be undertaken diligently and without loss of clear comprehension, *ātāpī sampajaññaṃ na riñcati*. These two terms also feature prominently in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and thus further underline the close relationship of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* passage with mindfulness practice. Through contemplation undertaken in this way, the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* discourse concludes, a wise practitioner will thoroughly comprehend feelings and reach freedom from the influxes, *tato so vedanā sabbā, parijānāti paṇḍito, so vedanā pariññāya, diṭṭhe dhamme anāsavo.*

The need to direct awareness to the additional distinction between worldly and unworldly feelings, introduced in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, is required in order to detect which manifestation of pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feelings is related to the underlying tendencies. The *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* explains that the joy and equanimity of deep concentration, as well as the sadness of not having reached liberation, are experiences of feelings that do not activate the underlying tendencies to passion, aversion, or ignorance (MN I 303).

The distinction between worldly and unworldly feelings recurs in the *Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta* under the heading of feelings related to the household life, *gehasita*, and feelings related to renunciation, *nekkhamasita*. (MN III 217). The *Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta* explains that in the case of feelings of joy, *somanassa*, the type of joy that is related to the household life arises due to the pleasing and agreeable features of sense-objects. Joy related to renunciation, however, arises when contemplating the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of sense-objects.

In the case of feelings of displeasure or sadness, *domanassa*, those related to the household life manifest when hankering for unobtainable sense-objects, whereas sadness related to renunciation occurs when generating longing for liberation.

Finally neutral feelings related to the household life are merely the outcome of the bland features of sense-objects, whose nature is such that it does not call up any particular interest or reaction. In contrast, neutral feelings related to renunciation are the result of equanimity gained through insight into the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of sense-objects. Hence the type of feeling that is related to the household life is due to the nature of the objects of the senses, whereas a feeling related to renunciation goes beyond and transcends the limitations of the object it experiences.

The *Chachakka-sutta* explains that it is impossible to make an end of *dukkha* unless the underlying tendencies in relation to each of the three types of feeling are overcome (MN III 285). Those who engage in practicing accordingly, by not allowing the mind to attach to pleasant feelings, or to get frustrated when unpleasant feelings arise, and by developing clear understanding of the true nature of neutral feelings, will reach final liberation. The discourse concludes by reporting that sixty

monks reached liberation while this instruction was given, a telling testimony to the efficacy of developing detachment towards feelings.

8.3 The Potential of Contemplating Feelings

The potential of contemplation of feelings is also highlighted in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, which points out that one who develops full detachment in regard to the three types of feeling will make an end of *dukkha* here and now (AN V 51). This potential is perhaps not surprising in view of the relationship of feeling to craving in the account of the conditioned genesis of *dukkha* given in the twelve-link presentation of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*.

The perspective offered by this crucial conditioning link between feelings and craving could be related to the beginning section of the same twelve-link series (see SN III 96), according to which the perpetuation of the *saṃsāric* predicament is due to formations, *saṅkhāra*s, that are rooted in ignorance, *avijjā*. This makes it unmistakeably clear that the presence of mindfulness and equanimity in regard to the impending reaction towards the experience of feeling is of outstanding significance for progress on the path to liberation.

The theme of remaining aloof from reacting to feelings recurs in the *Mahāsaḷāyatanika-sutta* in an exposition on six sense-door experiences. This discourse proclaims that by staying aloof from infatuation in regard to any of the sense-organs, in regard to their respective sense-objects, and in regard to the feelings that arise in dependence on the organ and its objects, one is actually undertaking the noble eightfold path. The view, intention, effort, mindfulness and concentration of one who practices like this naturally become right view, right

intention, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration (MN III 289).

The *Mahāsaḷāyatanika-sutta* adds that the remaining three path factors - speech, action and livelihood - would have to be purified earlier. According to the same discourse, one who develops the noble eightfold path in this way thereby also covers all four *satipaṭṭhāna*s, as well as the other qualities related to awakening, *bodhipakkhiya dhamma*. Practising in this way one develops *samatha* and *vipassanā* in conjunction, a development that leads to knowledge and liberation, *vijjā* and *vimutti.* Hence all the central aspects of the early Buddhist path to liberation could be covered and developed through this particular mode of practice.

8.4 Feelings and Impermanence

According to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, once mindfulness has been directed to a clear recognition of the basic triad of feeling types and to their distinction into worldly and unworldly types, actual contemplation requires directing awareness to the arising and passing away of any kind of feeling, be they internal or external. This introduces the perhaps most crucial insight perspective on feelings, namely clear awareness of their impermanent nature.

A discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* treats contemplation of the impermanent nature of feelings under the heading of the maxim that "all things are not worth sticking to", *sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya* (AN IV 88). According to its explanation, someone intent on practising in this way should contemplate any of the three types of feelings as impermanent, as fading away, as ceasing, and as [something to be] relinquished, *anicca, virāga, nirodha, paṭinissagga*.

This presentation points to a progression of the practice, where contemplating impermanence leads to awareness of the disappearance of feelings, in terms of their passing away and cessation. This enshrines a crucial aspect of the development of insight. By emphasizing the disappearance facet of the experience of impermanence, this slight shift of perspective during contemplation brings about a deepening of the process of relinquishing any attachment to feelings and thereby issues in dispassion, another nuance of the term *virāga*, heralding the deepening of insight into the ultimately unsatisfactory nature of all felt experience.

Ñāṇaponika (1983: 5) explains that "when in insight meditation the vanishing moment of feelings becomes more strongly marked, the impermanent nature of the feelings will impress itself very deeply on the meditator's mind. This experience ... will gradually mature into the Insight Knowledge of Dissolution, *bhaṅga-ñāṇa*. On reaching that stage, the meditator will find himself well on the road to further progress".

The above quoted discourse from the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* indicates that one who practices in this way will not grasp at anything in this world, *na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*. This expression links the present description to the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. The need to avoid any grasping would also be implicit in the detailed examination of feelings in the *Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta*, which highlights that the impermanent, unsatisfactory and changing nature of feelings are their main disadvantage or draw-back, *ādīnava* (MN I 90).

Feelings do provide satisfaction, undeniably, and the joy and pleasure one may feel is the gratification, *assāda*, that can be derived from them. Yet, in view of their impermanent nature, the only true solution, *nissaraṇa*, in relation to feeling is to give up all desire and passion for them. Only such giving up

will enable one to dwell independently, in accordance with the *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions, without grasping at anything in the world.

A detailed perspective on the implications of the changing nature of each of the three types of feeling comes to the fore in the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, which indicates that pleasant feeling is pleasant as long as it lasts, but causes displeasure once it changes, *sukhā vedanā ṭhitisukhā vipariṇāmadukkhā* (MN I 303). Unpleasant feeling in turn is displeasing as long as it lasts, but its change is experienced as pleasant, *dukkhā vedanā ṭhitidukkhā vipariṇāmasukhā*; while neutral feeling is pleasurable when known, but unpleasant when not known, *adukkhamasukhā vedanā ñāṇa-sukhā aññāṇa-dukkhā.*

The last case indicates that neutral feeling, though in itself hedonically neutral, during actual contemplation can be experienced as a pleasurable object of meditation, a pleasure derived from the presence of knowledge. Outside of a meditative context, however, neutral feelings may be experienced by someone without awareness as simply 'boring', and such boredom can become a strong motivating force to search for sensual diversion.

8.5 The Significance of *Dukkha*

Another and rather crucial aspect of the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*'s presentation is that not only will pleasant feelings eventually cause the experience of unpleasantness, once they change and become otherwise, but unpleasant feelings can cause the pleasure of relief once they change and disappear. This perspective is significant in so far as it provides a necessary background to the statement that whatever is felt is included within *dukkha*, *yaṃ kiñci vedayitaṃ taṃ dukkhasmiṃ* (SN II 53).

Much hinges on a proper translation of the term *dukkha* in such a context. If one were to opt for the most commonly used translation of *dukkha* as "suffering", this passage would propose that all felt experience is to be included under the heading of 'suffering'. In the light of the above passage from the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, such a conclusion would meet with difficulties, since though the presence of unpleasant feelings may be experienced as 'suffering', the presence of pleasant feelings is certainly not experienced as 'suffering', and the two are, according to the dictum of the *Mahānidāna-sutta*, mutually exclusive experiences.

When the future change of both feelings is considered, one could attribute the qualification 'suffering' to pleasant feeling, as its change leads to displeasure. Yet, in order to appropriately treat the effects of future change, one would also have to take into consideration the change of unpleasant feeling, and such a change, as the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* clarifies, is experienced as pleasant and not as 'suffering'.

Hence the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*'s presentation reveals the limitations of the translation "suffering", making it advisable to adopt a different translation of the term *dukkha* in such a context. An alternative would be, for example, the term "unsatisfactory". Though pleasant feeling is pleasant while it lasts, it is still unsatisfactory, precisely because it does not last forever. According to another passage, this is in fact the implication of the dictum that whatever is felt is included within *dukkha*, namely that all felt experience is unsatisfactory, however pleasant it may be at present, because it does not last (SN IV 216).

According to an instruction given in the *Itivuttaka*, the unsatisfactory nature of feelings needs to be contemplated in particular in relation to pleasant feelings. In the case of unpleasant

feeling, their afflictive nature should be attended to. When contemplating neutral feelings, impermanence should be given importance (It 47; cf. also SN IV 207).

Due to their affectively bland nature, neutral feelings are the most difficult to contemplate of the three types of feeling and may easily be mistaken for a continuously present background against which pleasant and unpleasant feelings manifest. Closer inspection, however, reveals that even the comparatively subtle experience of neutral feelings is marked by the characteristic of impermanence and change. Comprehensive practice undertaken in this manner has an outstanding potential of issuing in liberating insight.

One who has reached liberation will be thoroughly detached in regard to any feeling, endowed with the clear understanding that whatever is felt is impermanent and not worth any delight (MN III 244). He or she clearly understands that the feelings that are felt are limited to the body, and with the dissolution of the body all feeling will simply become cool, *kāyassa bhedā ... sabbavedayitāni ... sītibhavissanti*.

9. Happiness / *Sukha*

The significance of the Pāli term *sukha*, besides qualifying feelings as being "pleasant", stands for various levels of a "happy" state of mind. The significance of *sukha* in the form of various types of happiness recognized and valued in early Buddhism can easily be underestimated. A close survey of the Pāli discourses, however, brings to light that the development of appropriate states of happiness forms an important aspect of the early Buddhist path to liberation (see also Premasiri 1981). Thus an entire chapter of the *Dhammapada* is dedicated to the topic of *sukha* (Dhp 197 - 208), and references to the experience of happiness are a recurring theme in the verses of awakened monks and nuns collected in the *Theragāthā* and the *Therīgāthā*.

In order to explore the significance of *sukha* in the Pāli discourses, I will begin by examining different types of happiness (9.1), followed by turning to the ethical perspective on happiness (9.2) and the relationship between happiness and the development of the mind (9.3).

9.1 Types of Happiness

The distinction of pleasant feelings into "worldly", *sāmisa*, and "unworldly", *nirāmisa*, types (MN I 59) can similarly be applied to forms of happiness. Worldly manifestations of happiness, *sāmisa sukha*, arise in relation to sensual pleasure. Unworldly forms of happiness, *nirāmisa sukha*, arise during absorption. More unworldly than unworldly types of happiness,

nirāmisā nirāmisatara sukha, represent the pleasure experienced by *arahant*s when reviewing their mental freedom from defilements (SN IV 235).

The same basic distinction between worldly and unworldly types of happiness can be seen to underlie a set of analytical schemes applied to *sukha*. These contrast the happiness of lay life, *gihisukha*, to the happiness of the life of one gone forth, *pabbajitasukha*; or else sensual happiness, *kāmasukha*, to non-sensual happiness, *nekkhammasukha*; or again happiness that is with attachment, *upadhisukha*, to happiness free from attachment, *nirupadhisukha*; or happiness related to the influxes, *sāsavasukha*, to happiness not related to the influxes, *anāsavasukha*; or happiness that is noble, *ariya*, to happiness that is ignoble, *anariya* (AN I 80).

Other distinctions of happiness are related to the development of deeper levels of concentration, contrasting the happiness that arises together with bliss, *sappītika*, to that without bliss, *nippītika*; or happiness associated with pleasure, *sātasukha*, to happiness associated with equanimity, *upekkhāsukha*; or happiness derived from concentration, *samādhisukha*, to happiness not derived from concentration, *asamādhisukha*; or else happiness that has a form as its object, *rūpārammaṇa sukha*, to happiness that has a formless object, *arūpārammaṇa sukha* (AN I 81).

These analytical schemes highlight two aspects in relation to happiness. One fundamental distinction involves the basic contrast between wholesome and unwholesome types of happiness, a contrast that also underlies the distinction between worldly and unworldly types of happiness. In addition to this more ethically oriented form of analysis, the above listed instances also draw attention to a successive refinement of happiness during deeper stages of concentration.

Both aspects are of central importance in relation to *sukha* and build on each other, the first indicating what should be developed and avoided, while the second depicts a progressive refinement of what is to be developed. These two complementary perspectives on happiness – distinguishing between unwholesome and wholesome types and treating the stages of development of its wholesome manifestations – run like a red thread through the entire compass of the teachings in the Pāli discourses, from instructions on basic morality through the path of mental purification all the way up to full awakening.

9.2 The Ethical Perspective on Happiness

According to a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, the Buddha emphatically proclaimed that, if it were not possible to develop and do what is wholesome, and if developing what is wholesome would not lead to happiness, he would not ask his disciples to undertake such development. But because it is possible and does lead to happiness, he instructed his disciples to develop and do what is wholesome (AN I 58).

Happiness, another discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* asserts, is not achieved by mere wishing. Those who want happiness have to undertake the path that leads to happiness, *sukha-saṃvattanikā paṭipadā* (AN III 48). The path to happiness, however, requires a long-term perspective, a perspective based on the awareness that what yields happiness right away may be conducive to future happiness or to future suffering, depending on its ethical quality.

One who harms others, and thereby destroys their happiness, will himself or herself subsequently not be able to achieve happiness (Dhp 131). In contrast, conduct that does not harm oneself or others is conduct that results in happiness, *sukhavipāka* (MN II 115). A wise person, who maintains moral conduct,

will experience the happiness of blamelessness in the present life and happiness of a fortunate rebirth as a future reward for his or her wholesome conduct (MN III 171 and It 67). Just as moral restraint – such as abstaining from killing, theft etc. – will lead to future happiness, so will indulging in immoral activities inevitably result in future suffering. Hence to maintain virtuous conduct and to avoid evil is a fundamental condition for achieving happiness (Dhp 333). One who thus acts in accordance with the *Dhamma*, a *dhammacārī*, will fare happily in this world and the next (Dhp 169).

Several discourses reflect a very practical sense of happiness. Considering happiness from the perspective of a man in the world, these passages depict four types of happiness that a householders can expect from rightfully undertaking their livelihood (AN II 69): the happiness of acquiring wealth by their own effort, *atthisukha*; the happiness of using this wealth to give pleasure to themselves and to do meritorious deeds, *bhogasukha*; the happiness of being free from debt, *anaṇasukha*; and the happiness of being free from blame, *anavajjasukha*.

Those who use rightly gained wealth in a proper way bring happiness to themselves and others (AN II 67). To support those worthy of support, in particular one's mother and father, as well as recluses and Brahmins, is a source of happiness (Dhp 332). By giving food to monks and recluses one gives happiness, and therefore will gain happiness in return (AN III 42). Hence merit is but another name for happiness (It 15).

The main wellspring of happiness lies, however, in the training of the mind, which is the true source of happiness. No other thing is as conducive to happiness as a mind that is well trained and developed (AN I 6). As the famous twin verses standing at the opening of the *Dhammapada* declare, one who

acts or speaks with a pure mind will be followed by happiness just like a shadow (Dhp 2).

To train the mind requires, however, a re-evaluation of happiness. The *Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta* readily acknowledges that to indulge in sensuality does produce feelings of pleasure, which constitutes the aspect of gratification of sensual pleasures, *kāmānaṃ assādo* (MN I 85). Yet, against this gratification stand their multiple disadvantages. Though pleasant feelings may cause happiness as long as they last, their changing nature inevitably spells dissatisfaction (MN I 303).

Sensual happiness is not only ephemeral, it also has undesirable after-effects that outweigh the pleasure obtained. The *Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta* vividly depicts the multifarious problems resulting from the pursuit of sensual pleasures, showing that criminality and warfare can, ultimately, be traced back to desire for sensual gratification (MN I 87).

Another problem with the pursuit of sensual types of happiness is that gratification results in strengthening desires, a predicament comparable to a leper cauterising his wounds over a fire (MN I 507). Though the leper will experience momentary pleasure, the act of cauterisation causes the wounds to become more infected and thus inevitably leads to a deterioration of the leper's condition. In a similar way, the more beings indulge in sensual pleasure, the more they will burn with sensual desire, a vicious cycle turning into a bottomless vortex of ever greater desires clamouring for satisfaction.

Thus the happiness gained through sensual pleasures, if examined from a long-term perspective, turns out to be spurious. Beings indulging in sensuality suffer from a perceptual distortion, *saññāvipallāsa*, which causes them to attribute happiness to what on proper examination turns out to be otherwise (AN II 52).

A thorough re-assessment of the nature of happiness underlies the dictum that "what others call happiness, the noble ones call unsatisfactory", *yaṃ pare sukhato āhu, tad ariyā āhu dukkhato* (Sn 762).From the perspective of such re-assessment, sensual pleasures will be seen as a form of "happiness" that is "filthy" or even "dung-like", *mīḷhasukha*, a "lowly happiness", *puthujjanasukha*, and thus an "ignoble happiness", *anariyasukha*, which is better avoided (MN I 454).

A motivation for a reorientation against the powerful pull of sensual desires can be found in the reflection that it is reasonable to give up a smaller happiness, if thereby a greater and superior happiness can be gained (Dhp 290). According to the *Araṇavibhaṅga-sutta*, the Buddha openly invited his disciples to find out what really constitutes true happiness and, based on this understanding, to pursue it, *sukhavinicchayaṃ jaññā, sukhavinicchayaṃ ñatvā ajjhattaṃ sukham anuyuñjeyya* (MN III 230).

The above injunction to find out what really constitutes happiness refers in particular to the happiness experienced with deeper states of concentration, a form of happiness far superior to sensual pleasures. Such happiness is a "divine happiness", *dibba sukha*, with which all interest in the vulgar happiness of sensuality ceases (MN I 504). Such divine happiness is moreover the "happiness of renunciation", *nekkhammasukha*, and the "happiness of seclusion", *pavivekasukha*. It is a "peaceful [type] of happiness", *upasamasukha*, and a type of "happiness [that leads] to awakening", *sambodhasukha*, which should be pursued and developed (MN I 454). Since all beings are desirous of happiness, *sukhakāmā hi devā manussā* (DN II 269), the crucial point is thus to skilfully redirect this natural tendency in such a way as to lead to real happiness.

9.3 Happiness and the Development of the Mind

The injunction to develop and pursue noble forms of happiness points to a gradual refinement of happiness through the practice of the path. The function and importance of happiness as a means for progress on the path appears to have been a direct outcome of the Buddha's own experience when he was still in search of liberation.

According to the *Bodhirājakumāra-sutta*, before his awakening the Buddha himself had accepted the belief common in ancient India that all pleasures have to be shunned in order to be able to reach liberation (MN II 93). The *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* reports that after his ascetic practices had proved fruitless, the Buddha-to-be remembered the happiness of a deep state of concentration experienced at an earlier stage of his life. Reflecting on this experience, he asked himself: "Why am I afraid of a happiness that is aloof from sensuality and unwholesomeness?", *kinnu kho ahaṃ tassa sukhassa bhāyāmi, yaṃ taṃ sukhaṃ aññatr'eva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi?* He then came to the conclusion: "I am not afraid of such a type of happiness!", *na kho ahaṃ tassa sukhassa bhāyāmi* (MN I 246).

The realisation that happiness need not be avoided, since the type of happiness experienced during deeper states of concentration is a wholesome and recommendable form of happiness, marked a decisive turning point in his quest for liberation.

The Buddha's newly found attitude to happiness stood in stark contrast to his ascetic contemporaries, a contrast highlighted in the *Cūḷadukkhakkhandha-sutta*. This discourse presents the Buddha in discussion with other ascetics, who believed that future happiness requires undergoing self-inflicted suffering. Their discussion ended with the Buddha making the humorous point that, in contrast to the pain they experienced through undertaking self-mortification, he was able to experi-

ence happiness continuously for seven days. Hence his experience of happiness was superior even to the happiness available to the king of the country (MN I 94).

In a similar vein, awakened monks and nuns extol their experience of happiness achieved through successful practice of the path. Thus Sāmaññakāni affirms that, if practice is undertaken properly, one who seeks happiness will obtain it, *sukhaṃ sukhattho labhate* (Th 35). Pakkha proclaims that he has reached happiness through happiness, *sukhen'anvāgataṃ sukhaṃ* (Th 63); just as Aṅganikabhāradvāja has obtained happiness through happiness, *sukhena sukhaṃ laddhaṃ* (Th 220). Ekavihāri rejoices in the happiness of liberation, *vimuttisukhena sukhito ramissāmi* (Th 545). The former brigand Aṅgulimāla now lives happily, whether lying down or standing, *sukhaṃ sayāmi ṭhāyāmi, sukhaṃ kappemi jīvitaṃ* (Th 888). The nun Sumaṅgalamātā meditates happily thinking 'oh happiness', *'aho sukhan'ti sukhato jhāyāmi*. (Thī 24).

The early Buddhist monks and nuns delighted in their way of life, so much so that a visiting king described them as "smiling and cheerful, sincerely joyful and plainly delighting, living at ease and unruffled"(MN II 121).

As explicitly indicated in the *Devadaha-sutta*, effort is fruitful in the case of those who do not give up the happiness that accords with the *Dhamma*, *dhammikañca sukhaṃ na paricca-jati ... evam pi saphalo upakkamo hoti saphalaṃ padhānaṃ* (MN II 223). The rationale behind such a statement is not merely a higher form of hedonism, but the very reason that the development of wholesome happiness constitutes a crucially important factor for progress on the path. That is, spiritual happiness has a clearly delineated function in the early Buddhist path scheme.

From this perspective it becomes increasingly clear why the arising of a Buddha and his teaching of the *Dhamma* are a source of happiness (Dhp 194), and why the motivation behind the teaching activity of a Buddha and his disciples is the happiness of gods and men (SN I 105) − simply because by teaching the *Dhamma* they teach the path to true happiness.

Several discourses indicate that the development of wisdom and the achievement of realisation depend on developing happiness. These discourses depict a conditional sequence that begins with "delight", *pāmojja*, and leads via "bliss", *pīti*, and tranquillity to the arising of "happiness", *sukha*. Based on the presence of happiness, concentration naturally arises, which in turn forms the basis for wisdom and realisation. The dynamics of this causal sequence is comparable to the natural course of rain falling on a hilltop, which gradually fills the rivulets and rivers, and finally flows down to the sea (SN II 32). Once spiritual happiness is present, there is no need to wish for the mind to become concentrated and wisdom to arise, since this will naturally happen as a matter of course (AN V 3).

The *Kandaraka-sutta* reveals that during the gradual path of training a progressive refinement of spiritual happiness takes place (MN I 346). The first stage of this ascending series is the happiness due to blamelessness, *anavajjasukha*, a happiness that results from maintaining moral conduct. Such happiness due to blamelessness will grow further once a frugal life style and contentment become additional contributing facts. Contentment, according to a *Dhammapada* verse, is itself a source of happiness (Dhp 331).

The next stage of happiness envisaged in the *Kandaraka-sutta* comes from leaving sensual distractions behind by practising sense-restraint. This type of happiness is "unimpaired happiness", *abyāsekasukha*, since the bondage of sensuality has

temporarily been left behind. A discourse in the *Itivuttaka* adds that knowing measure with food and practising sense-restraint lead to happiness of the body, *kāyasukha*, and happiness of the mind, *cetosukha* (It 24).

The description in the *Kandaraka-sutta* continues from the unimpaired happiness due to freedom from sensual distraction to the different types of happiness experienced with deepening levels of concentration. These are the "bliss and happiness of seclusion", *vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ*, the "bliss and happiness of concentration", *samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ*, and the "happy dwelling in equanimity and mindfulness", *upekkhako satimā sukhavihārī*, of the first, second and third *jhāna* respectively. Such types of happiness testify to the fact that diligent practice of meditation is indeed a source of pure happiness (Dhp 27).

This holds good not only for the development of tranquillity, but also for the practice of insight meditation. Contemplating with right wisdom the impermanent nature of phenomena is a source of joy (MN III 217), and to see the rise and fall of the five aggregates can lead to delight and bliss (Dhp 374). The rapture of rightly contemplating the *Dhamma* transcends worldly types of rapture (Dhp 373), so much so that even listening to the most refined type of music cannot compare with it (Th 398 and Th 1071).

In fact, though the Buddha's teaching of the four noble truths places much emphasis on *dukkha*, the third and the fourth noble truth are actually concerned with the positive values of freedom from *dukkha* and the practical path that leads to that freedom. Thus insight into the four noble truths is not a matter of sadness and despair, because such insight will be accompanied by happiness and joy (SN V 441).

The further the path has been developed, the deeper the happiness becomes. Hence it comes as no surprise that the culmi-

nation of the successive stages of happiness described in the *Kandaraka-sutta* is the happiness that comes with liberation, when one has become truly stilled and cool within, *nibbuto sītibhūto sukhapaṭisaṃvedī* (MN I 349). The eradication of defilements is a well-spring of happiness indeed (DN I 196).

A complementary presentation of a progressive series of types of happiness can be found in the *Bahuvedanīya-sutta*, which takes into account not only the four *jhāna*s, but also the four immaterial attainments. Notably, this discourse reckons the four immaterial attainments also as types of happiness, even though with such sublime levels of concentration, "feelings" of happiness are left behind.

The culmination of this progressive series in the *Bahuvedanīya-sutta* is the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling (MN I 400). This is reckoned to be a form of happiness superior to the other types of happiness mentioned earlier. Though it might seem contradictory to speak of happiness when all feelings have ceased, according to this discourse, the Buddha clarified that his conception of *sukha* was not limited to the experience of feeling.

A similar perspective on happiness recurs in those discourses which declare *Nibbāna* to be the highest form of happiness (MN I 508 and Dhp 203). Asked how *Nibbāna* could be considered as happiness, since with *Nibbāna* all feelings cease, Sāriputta readily replies that it is precisely the cessation of feeling which causes happiness (AN IV 415).

With these passages, the two main meanings of the term *sukha* − "pleasant" feeling and a "happy" state of mind − no longer coexist. By presenting the cessation of feeling as supreme forms of happiness, the culminating point of the early Buddhist conception of *sukha* transcends the entire range of felt experience.

From the lofty viewpoint of such transcendence, the attitude to pleasant feeling changes thoroughly. An *arahant* no longer delights in pleasant feelings or clings to them, but experiences them with detachment and wisdom (SN II 82). What attraction could they hold for one who knows the destruction of craving, a happiness superior to any mundane or divine form of happiness, the happiness of liberation?

10. Equanimity / *Upekkhā*

The term *upekkhā*, "equanimity", is derived from *upa* and *īkṣ*, and thus conveys a basic sense of "looking upon". In order to explore the various aspects of such 'looking on' through *upekkhā*, I will begin by considering equanimity towards sensory experience (10.1), followed by turning to the role of equanimity as a divine abode (10.2), and as a factor of awakening (10.3), also evaluating its role in regard to the development of insight and in regard to the attainment of absorption.

10.1 Equanimity towards Sensory Experience

Equanimity as the expression of a detached attitude towards sense-experience is described in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. According to this discourse, a monk becomes worthy of respect and offerings if he is neither elated, *sumana*, nor depressed, *dumana*, in regard to what is experienced through the six senses, but instead dwells with equanimity, mindfulness and clear comprehension, *upekkhako viharati sato sampajāno* (AN III 279).

Such an inner attitude of equanimity towards sense-objects is the outcome of a gradual training. According to the *Indriya-bhāvanā-sutta*, some contemporaries of the Buddha were of the opinion that the way to deal with the attraction of sense-objects is to just avoid them. From the perspective of the Buddha, however, the proper procedure is rather to see sense-experience, whether agreeable or disagreeable, as something that is gross and conditioned. In contrast to such gross and condi-

tioned experience, equanimity is peaceful and sublime (MN III 299). This conveys a sense of inner distance towards experience that enables maintaining balance with whatever occurs.

The same discourse then describes how to arrive at mastery in regard to sense-experience. According to this description, one trains to perceive what is "disagreeable", *paṭikkula*, as "agreeable", *appaṭikkula*, and what is agreeable as disagreeable, followed by perceiving both as disagreeable, and then both as agreeable. The final stage in such training is reached when the labels "disagreeable" and "agreeable" are left behind and one is able to dwell in equanimity, endowed with mindfulness and clear comprehension in regard to any experience (MN III 301).

It is noteworthy that the *Indriyabhāvanā-sutta*, just as the above *Aṅguttara-nikāya* passage, should present equanimity in conjunction with mindfulness and clear comprehension This highlights the close relationship between equanimity and those qualities of the mind that stand for a full apperception of the situation at hand and for the presence of wisdom.

The *Saḷāyatana-sutta* distinguishes between worldly types of equanimity, *gehasitā upekkhā*, experienced by ignorant worldlings towards sense-objects, and equanimity based on renunciation, *nekkhammasitā upekkhā*, which arises as the result of awareness of the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of sense-objects (MN III 219). The worldly forms of equanimity result from the object itself, whose features arouse neither a positive nor a negative reaction. In contrast, equanimity based on renunciation transcends its object, *ativattati*, as this equanimity is caused by an inner attitude, not by the outer features of the object.

The discourses often refer to the felt experience of equanimity under the heading of the "faculty of equanimity", *upekkhin-*

driyā. This faculty covers what is bodily and mentally experienced as neither comfortable nor uncomfortable, *n'eva sātaṃ nāsātaṃ vedayitaṃ* (SN V 211).

The faculty of equanimity is one of five such faculties. The other four are the faculties of bodily pleasure, *sukha*, bodily pain, *dukkha*, mental joy*, somanassa*, and mental displeasure, *domanassa* (SN V 209). While the faculties of bodily pleasure and mental joy correspond to pleasant feeling, *sukhā vedanā*; the faculty of bodily pain and mental displeasure correspond to unpleasant feeling, *dukkhā vedanā*; and the faculty of equanimity corresponds to neutral, or more literally to "neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling", *adukkhamasukhā vedanā* (SN V 210). The other four faculties cease progressively with the attainment of the four *jhānas*, whereas the faculty of equanimity ceases only with the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings, *saññāvedayitanirodha* (SN V 215).

A related type of presentation includes *upekkhā* in a list of six elements, *dhātu*, of which the first four are again *sukha, dukkha, somanassa,* and *domanassa*, while the remainder are *upekkhā* and "ignorance", *avijjā* (MN III 62).

10.2 Equanimity as a Divine Abode

To remain equanimous is not only an important stage in perceptual mastery, but is also of considerable advantage in relation to other beings, where equanimity functions as one of the four divine abodes, the *brahmavihāra*s. In the standard description of the practice of the four divine abodes as forms of "liberation of the mind", *cetovimutti*, equanimity comes last (e.g. DN I 251). It thus appears to constitute the culmination point of the practice. This much can be deduced from the fact that in other similar listings, which cover the four *jhāna*s or the

four immaterial attainments, the last in the series comes as a climax and builds on those mentioned earlier.

Understood in this way, equanimity as a divine abode constitutes the climax of a process that is based on the development of loving kindness, *mettā*, compassion, *karuṇā*, and sympathetic joy, *muditā.* This clearly shows that equanimity is not simply a state of listless lack of concern, but rather a mental state that rounds off a systematic opening of the heart, in the sense of being a "complement to the first three more concerned dispositions" (Aronson 1986: 89). That is, "joy and impartiality further intensify and extend the scope and power of love and compassion"(Stoler Miller 1979: 210). Instead of being merely a state of dull indifference, such equanimity is "the result of ... deliberate training, not the casual outcome of a passing mood" (Ñāṇaponika 1993: 16).

That equanimity comes last in the listing of the divine abodes "does not mean that equanimity is to supplant the first three sublime attitudes in one's future practice" (Aronson 1979: 8). Much rather, future practice will involve all four divine abodes, not being confined to practice of equanimity alone. This much becomes evident from a verse in the *Sutta-nipāta*, which implies such continuity (Sn 73).

That from an early Buddhist perspective equanimity is not considered as invariably superior to the other divine abodes can be seen in a passage in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. This passage reports that Sāriputta was publicly contradicted several times by another monk. The Buddha finally intervened and upbraided the other monks for not intervening earlier (AN III 194). Why, he asked, did they not have compassion when a senior monk was being vexed in public, and instead continued to look on with equanimity? This passage shows that in early Buddhism equanimity was not considered as the appropriate

response to every situation. Instead, at times an active intervention is required and should be undertaken, out of compassion.

The same is also reflected in another passage in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, which reports a visitor to the Buddha proposing that to refrain completely from criticizing others is the best attitude, as this would be a superior expression of equanimity (AN II 101). The Buddha disagreed with this proposal, explaining that one should criticize on those occasions where this is suitable.

The same issue is taken up from a complementary perspective in another discourse, which recommends admonishing someone even if this leads to vexation for oneself and for the other, as long as there is hope that the other will thereby become established in what is wholesome (MN II 241). Equanimity towards this person comes in as the appropriate attitude only if it can be anticipated that it will be impossible to establish the other in what is wholesome.

These passages clearly show that early Buddhism did not consider equanimity as the only appropriate attitude towards others, but rather saw it as an attitude that, in spite of its many advantages, may not always be appropriate. In fact, equanimity can be of two types, as some forms of equanimity lead to an increase of wholesome states, while others manifestations of equanimity lead to an increase of unwholesome states (DN II 279). For this reason, certain types of equanimity should not be developed.

In order to develop wholesome types of equanimity, the *Mahāhatthipadopama-sutta* recommends calling to mind the famous simile of the saw. With the help of such recollection, it becomes possible to generate "equanimity based on [what is] wholesome", *upekkhā kusalanissitā*, so that one will be able to

bear even being attacked with fists, sticks and knives (MN I 186). Another recollection that can help to face even extreme situations can be elicited from the *Puṇṇovāda-sutta*. According to this discourse, the monk Puṇṇa was ready to bear any type of attack with the reflection that his aggressors were kind in that they were not attacking him in ways even worse than what they were already doing (MN III 268).

These passages reveal the potential of equanimity in overcoming the tendency to irritation, *paṭigha* (MN I 424), or to anger, *āghāta* (AN III 185). In addition, equanimity developed as a liberation of the mind also becomes an antidote to passion, *rāga* (AN III 292). The relationship between equanimity and the removal of passion is further elaborated in another discourse, which explains that through developing the perception of absence of beauty, *asubhasaññā*, the attraction of sexuality will be replaced by equanimity (AN IV 47).

According to the *Jīvaka-sutta*, the Buddha's own practice of equanimity and of the other divine abodes had its foundation in his complete freedom from passion, anger and delusion (MN I 370). Due to the aloofness of the Buddha's equanimity from any defilement, his *brahmavihāra*, literally "Brahmic dwelling", was superior even to that of Brahmā.

A discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* indicates that for the Buddha the divine abode of equanimity or of any other *brahmavihāra* became a divine resting place (AN I 183). His equanimity as a teacher was such that, even when some disciples would not listen to his teachings, he would remain equanimous (MN III 221).

Apparently equanimity was a quality possessed by the Buddha already previous to his awakening. The *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* describes a former time during which the bodhisattva was molested by cowherds who would spit at him, urinate on him,

throw dirt at him and poke sticks into his ears (MN I 79). In spite of such harassment, he remained completely equanimous. According to the *Cariyapiṭaka*, in such adverse circumstances the bodhisattva developed his perfection of equanimity, *upekkhāpāramī* (Cp 102). Notably, in the list of ten perfections that according to the Theravāda tradition are required for future Buddhahood, equanimity forms the culminating point, just as it does in the listing of the divine abodes. This thus again reflects the role of equanimity as a quality that rounds off a systematic development of mental qualities.

A discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* clarifies that the development of equanimity and of the other divine abodes should not be considered to be only a domain of Buddhists, as the same was also undertaken by contemporaries of the Buddha (SN V 116; see also Aronson 1984: 19). The same discourse throws into relief the decisive difference between their mode of practice and the way this was undertaken in the Buddha's dispensation. This difference lies in combining the practice of equanimity, or of any of the other divine abodes, with the development of the factors of awakening (SN V 120).

10.3 Equanimity as a Factor of Awakening

Similar to the position of equanimity in relation to the other divine abodes, in the context of the factors of awakening equanimity again constitutes the last in the listing. According to the *Ānāpānasati-sutta*, the factors of awakening arise in conditioned dependence on each other (MN III 85). This makes it clear that equanimity as a factor of awakening, *bojjhaṅga*, constitutes the climax of a process of meditative development that involves the previous establishment of mindfulness, *sati*, investigation-of-phenomena, *dhammavicaya*, energy, *viriya*, joy, *pīti*, tranquillity, *passaddhi*, and concentration, *samādhi*.

The *Ānāpānasati-sutta* indicates that the awakening factor of equanimity arises when one looks on with equanimity, *ajjhupekkhati*, at the concentrated state of mind that has been reached at this point of practice (MN III 86). The same *Ānāpānasati-sutta* speaks also of looking on with equanimity, *ajjhupekkhati*, in its description of contemplation of phenomena, *dhammānupassanā* (MN III 85). The discourse presents contemplating impermanence, dispassion, cessation and relinquishment when breathing in and breathing out as modes of practising contemplation of phenomena. In each case, a crucial requirement is that one looks on closely with equanimity, having left behind desire and discontent. In this way, the perspectives given on equanimity in the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* point to a mental balance that covers tranquillity as well as insight.

Equanimity as an awakening factor could be directed towards internal or towards external objects (SN V 111). To foster its development, attention should be given to things that are a basis for the awakening factor of equanimity, *upekkhāsambojjhaṅgaṭṭhāniyā dhammā* (SN V 67). Further explanation of this statement can be gathered from the commentaries, according to which one should in particular be detached towards people and things, avoid prejudiced people and associate with impartial people, and incline the mind towards the arousing and establishing of this particular factor of awakening (Ps I 299).

That equanimity as an awakening factor comes as the culmination of a development that has its foundation in mindfulness and investigation-of-phenomena reinforces a central point noted above in relation to sense-experience, where equanimity occurs in conjunction with mindfulness and clear comprehension. This close relationship of equanimity with clear discernment of a situation and the presence of wisdom is also reflected in a simile found in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, which com-

pares the seven factors of awakening to the seven precious and magical possessions of a wheel-turning king. In the context of this simile, the awakening factor of equanimity corresponds to the king's adviser, *parināyaka*, a position that would obviously require a high degree of discernment and wisdom (SN V 99).

Further illustrations of equanimity in the sense of mental balance can be found in two similes that employ various parts of a chariot and of an elephant to illustrate mental qualities. Here equanimity keeps the burden loaded on the chariot in balance (SN V 6), or else corresponds to the two parallel white teeth of the elephant (AN III 346 and Th 694).

Another simile describes how a goldsmith will at times simply look on with equanimity, *ajjhupekkhati*, after having alternately heated up gold and sprinkled it with water. Similarly, during the meditative development of the mind one should at times just give attention to the quality – literally "the sign" – of equanimity, *upekkhānimitta* (AN I 257). Nagao (1980: 249) draws attention to a passage in the *Saṃdhinirmocana*, where in the context of a similar exposition the sign of equanimity stands for 'effortlessness'.

The idea of balance between striving and laxity recurs in yet another imagery that illustrates the need for equanimous observation without interference with the example of a fire. Such a fire needs at times to be tended, at times needs to be quenched, and at times needs to be looked upon with equanimity (AN IV 45). For exertion to be fruitful, the *Devadaha-sutta* points out, one has to know not only when it is time to strive, but also when the time has come to simply remain with equanimity (MN II 223). As another discourse explains, one who does not look on with equanimity, when this is required, will not reach liberation (AN III 435).

Equanimity as a result of deepening insight is a central aspect of the progress towards liberation. A simile that illustrates how equanimity arises through insight can be found in the same *Devadaha-sutta*. This simile describes a man who sorely suffers on seeing the woman he loves conversing and laughing with another man. Yet, once this man realizes the cause of his distress and eventually overcomes his affection for the woman, her behaviour will no longer affect him (MN II 223).

The presence of equanimity and balance as an outcome of progressing insight is a recurrent theme in the discourses, though not always explicitly treated under the heading of *upekkhā*. Another way of expressing the same state of mental balance and detachment would be, for example, the expression "he dwells independently, without clinging to anything in the world", *anissito ca viharati, na ca kiñci loke upādiyati* (e.g. MN I 56). Yet another example would be a maxim in the *Āneñjasappāya-sutta*, which describes the aspiration: "what exists, what has become, that I abandon", *yad atthi, yaṃ bhūtaṃ, tad pajahāmi* (MN II 265).

The same maxim recurs again in another discourse, according to which those who have developed wisdom, through putting this injunction into practice, will reach full awakening or become non-returners (AN IV 70). As the *Āneñjasappāya-sutta* points out, full liberation will be attained only if even the refined equanimity acquired with the help of the above maxim is not clung to.

A complementary description of the balanced attitude resulting from deeper insight can be found in the *Dhātuvibhaṅga-sutta.* This discourse indicates that, at such level of development, even feelings that intimate the approach of death will simply be experienced with a balanced mind, fortified with the

knowledge that after death all feelings will simply become cool (MN III 244).

Besides being an outcome of the development of insight, equanimity also has an important role to play in relation to the development of tranquillity. The presence of equanimity is explicitly mentioned in the standard description of the third *jhāna*, during which one dwells in happiness and at the same time is equanimous and mindful, *upekhako satimā sukhavihārī* (DN I 75). During such attainment, a subtle but real perception of equanimity and happiness is present, *upekkhā-sukha-sukhumasacca-saññā* (DN I 183). It is the very presence of this equanimity and happiness that constitutes the last vestige of "perturbability", *iñjita*, during this attainment (MN I 454), or else the last vestige of "confinement", *sambādha* (AN IV 450). The danger here is to become internally stuck, once consciousness becomes intoxicated with the gratification derived from this experience of equanimity and happiness, *upekkhā-sukhassādagathita* (MN III 226).

Overcoming this last vestige of perturbability and confinement leads to the attainment of the fourth *jhāna*, characterized in the standard descriptions as a state that has purity of mindfulness with equanimity, *upekkhā-sati-parisuddhi* (DN I 75). According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the purity of mindfulness during this deep level of absorption is precisely due to equanimity (Vism 167). In this way leaving behind *sukha, dukkha, somanassa* and *domanassa* leads to a type of equanimity that is purified and tranquil (Sn 67).

Equanimity then continues to be prominent during the four immaterial attainments. A discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* relates liberation of the mind through equanimity, *upekkhā cetovimutti*, in particular to the attainment of the sphere of nothingness, *akiñcaññāyatana* (SN V 121).

The unified equanimity of deeper *jhāna* experience is considerably more refined than worldly types of equanimity that are based on diversity, *upekkhā nānattā nānattasitā* (MN I 364). Yet, even the sublime and purified equanimity of deeper stages of concentration is merely a conditioned state and thus needs to be left behind (MN III 243).

With the unworldly equanimity of the fourth *jhāna*, *nirāmisā upekkhā*, the worldly types of equanimity in relation to the world of sensuality are long left behind, *sāmisā upekkhā* (SN IV 237). A form of equanimity that is of an even more unworldly type, *nirāmisā nirāmisatarā upekkhā*, will arise when one reviews the successful attainment of final liberation.

The role of equanimity during the progress through the *jhāna*s indicates that it is the very presence of equanimity that "allows the mind to become fully sensitive and effective" (Gethin 1992: 159). This reinforces a point made above in regard to occurrences of equanimity in other contexts, which similarly go beyond mere indifference or insensitivity and present equanimity as an expression of a mature emotional attitude. Thus "Buddhist detachment means the non-reference of feeling to self, not merely the cultivation of a hedonic or emotively banal neutrality" (Katz 1979: 56).

It is in fact noticeable how again and again equanimity makes its appearance in the company of mindfulness and clear comprehension, which highlights the degree to which equanimity is related to full awareness and wisdom. In sum, then, *upekkhā* is an equanimity that "looks at" or "looks upon" with awareness and wisdom, not an indifference that looks away.

11. Knowledge and Vision according to Reality / *Yathābhūtañāṇadassana*

The Pāli expression *yathābhūtañāṇadassana* stands for "knowledge" and "vision" that is "in accordance with reality". To explore the import of such knowledge and vision according to reality, I will begin by examining the terms *yathābhūta* and *ñāṇadassana* individually (11.1-2). Then I will survey passages from the Pāli canon that are relevant to *yathābhūtañāṇadassana* as part of the Buddha's awakening (11.3), followed by turning to the development of knowledge and vision according to reality in general (11.4).

11.1 The Implications of *yathābhūta*

The qualification *yathābhūta* consists of *yathā*, "as", "like", or "according to"; and *bhūta*, which as a past participle of *bhavati* stands for what is "true" or "real", and also for what has "become" or "come to be". Kalupahana (1994: 51) explains that the use of the past participle *bhūta* expresses a non-essentialist conception of truth in early Buddhism, in the sense that what is "true" is what "has come to be".

An example where *yathābhūta* conveys the sense of "as it has come to be" can be found in the *Bhayabherava-sutta*. This discourse describes how the Buddha, when living alone in solitary forests during the time before his awakening, would confront and overcome fear there and then, in whatever way it manifested (MN I 21). That is, without changing his posture,

he would confront the issue right away, just "as it had come to be".

A similar sense of *yathābhūta* recurs in a description of the eight worldly conditions: gain and loss, fame and obscurity, blame and praise, happiness and suffering. To encounter these eight worldly conditions is simply part of living in the world "as it has come to be" (AN II 188). Hence it is meaningless to contend with these conditions, which are but natural aspects of living in the world "as it has come to be".

Elsewhere in the discourses, *yathābhūta* can qualify how a monastic disciple honestly discloses anything about himself to his fellow disciples or his teacher (DN III 237). This passage occurs within a description of a disciple who is not fraudulent or deceitful, *asaṭho amāyāvī*, hence here *yathābhūta* conveys the sense of being "according to reality" or "truthfully".

Another occurrence of similar implications can be found in the context of a simile, which describes a pair of messengers that approach the ruler of a town via a particular route in order to deliver a *yathābhūta* message (SN IV 194). In this simile, the messengers stand for tranquillity and insight, the route they take represents the noble eightfold path, and the ruler of the town corresponds to consciousness. The *yathābhūta* message that tranquillity and insight deliver to consciousness is *Nibbāna*. Elsewhere *Nibbāna* is qualified as "true", in contrast to what is deceptive (MN III 245). Applied to the simile of the pair of messengers, then, *yathābhūta* conveys a nuance of "truth", in that the message of liberation – *Nibbāna* – is certainly not deceptive.

Yet another aspect appears to underlie some passages that speak of developing the awakening factors in a way that is *yathābhūta* (DN II 83; DN III 101; SN V 161; AN V 195). These occurrences are part of statements on what all Buddhas, or

even all beings, have to undertake in order to reach awakening. Thus the sense that underlies *yathābhūta* here appears to be that the awakening factors have to be developed genuinely and to their fullest potential, "as they really are", so to speak, in order to enable the attainment of full liberation.

11.2 Knowledge and Vision

The expression "knowledge and vision" features in a range of contexts in the discourses, covering, for example, direct apperception of what happens in the mind of others (DN II 216); meditative vision of light and forms (AN IV 302); knowledge of past and future (DN III 134); various supernormal powers (DN I 76); and omniscience (e.g. MN I 92). In such contexts, "vision", *dassana*, stands for a purely mental 'seeing', in fact, in most of these instances "knowledge" and "vision" are of a supernormal type that goes beyond what can be apprehended with the physical eye alone.

The concurrence of the two terms "knowledge" and "vision" in the expression *ñāṇadassana* seems to reflect two closely related aspects of the same mental apprehension. That is, the combination of these two apperceptive activities conveys the sense that experiential 'seeing' and cognitive 'knowing' coalesce in *ñāṇadassana*. Hence *ñāṇadassana* stands for a type of insightful understanding wherein knowledge is vision and vision is knowledge, *yaṃ ñāṇaṃ taṃ dassanaṃ, yaṃ dassanaṃ taṃ ñāṇaṃ* (Vin III 91).

Another aspect of the same expression appears to be the experiential and comprehensive nature of such knowledge and vision. This becomes evident when considering the Buddha's endowment with knowledge and vision, which was such that he truly knew what he claimed to know and truly saw what he claimed to see, having realized it through direct knowledge,

abhiññā (MN II 9). Knowing he knew and seeing he saw, whereby he had 'become' sight and knowledge, as it were, *jānaṃ jānāti passaṃ passati cakkhubhūto ñāṇabhūto* (MN I 111). That is, one who claims to 'know and see' thereby claims to have direct and full experience of the matter at hand.

According to Jayatilleke (1963: 352), the expression *yathābhūtañāṇadassana* then points to a correspondence theory of truth in early Buddhism, where the truth or falsity of a statement depends on whether it accurately describes the world, whether it really 'corresponds' to facts.

11.3 The Buddha's Awakening

A rather axiomatic exposition of knowledge and vision according to reality can be found in the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta*, which describes the type of knowledge and vision according to reality that led to the Buddha's awakening. This discourse indicates that the Buddha only claimed to have reached unsurpassable awakening when his knowledge and vision according to reality in regard to the four noble truths had been completely purified in twelve modes (SN V 423).

These twelve modes result from developing each noble truth in three successive steps. The three steps require knowledge and vision of the respective noble truth, knowledge and vision of what needs to be done in regard to this truth, and the retrospective knowledge and vision that what needed to be done has been accomplished. The *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta* describes the knowledge and vision required in each of these cases with a whole string of terms, speaking of the "arising of sight, knowledge, wisdom, higher knowledge and clarity", *cakkhum udapādi ñāṇam udapādi paññā udapādi vijjā updapādi āloko udapādi.*

In regard to the first noble truth, the three successive steps are to know and see what is *dukkha*, to know and see that *dukkha* has to be fully understood, *pariññeyyaṃ*, and to know and see that *dukkha* has been fully understood, *pariññātaṃ*. Thus the first step is insight into the truth as such, the second step requires awareness that something needs to be done about it, and the third step represents the retrospective knowledge that this has been accomplished.

For knowledge and vision according to reality to be complete in regard to the second noble truth, insight into the arising of *dukkha* needs to lead to awareness that this arising of *dukkha* has to be abandoned, *pahātabbaṃ*, and needs to culminate in the knowledge that this arising of *dukkha* has been abandoned, *pahīnaṃ*. Similarly, knowledge and vision of the cessation of *dukkha* should lead to knowing and seeing that the cessation of *dukkha* needs to be realized, *sacchikātabbaṃ*, and that it has been realized, *sacchikataṃ*; just as knowledge and vision of the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha* should lead to knowing and seeing that this path needs to be developed, *bhāvetabbaṃ*, and that it has been developed, *bhāvitaṃ.*

This presentation shows the compass of knowledge and vision according to reality, which progresses from a decisive initial insight via a process of development to full realization. What can be clearly deduced from this passage is that such knowledge and vision according to reality is not merely an intellectual appreciation of the true nature of reality. Intellectual appreciation certainly has its place within the scope of development of knowledge and vision according to reality, forming the basis for the first step to be taken in regard to each of the four noble truths. Yet, the full development of knowledge and vision according to reality extends far beyond that.

The potential of each noble truth is only fully appreciated when it becomes clear that something needs to be done about it. Here "knowledge and vision according to reality" covers the whole range of practices that are part of the path to liberation from *dukkha*. Knowledge and vision according to reality is of relevance even beyond the culmination of the path, as the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta* shows, since the same term also covers retrospective knowledge of having reached the goal. Thus the treatment of knowledge and vision according to reality in the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta* highlights the degree to which knowledge and vision need to be acted on, need to be put into practice in order to be fully actualised.

The *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta* is not the only discourse that describes the knowledge and vision according to reality that led to the Buddha's awakening. According to the autobiographical account of the Buddha's awakening, given in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*, on the night of his break-through to liberation the Buddha directly knew according to reality, *yathābhūtaṃ abhaññāsiṃ*, the influxes, *āsavā*, their arising, their cessation, and the path leading to their cessation (MN I 249). The *Brahmajāla-sutta* records that the Buddha reached final liberation through having seen according to reality, *yathābhūtaṃ viditvā*, the arising and passing away of feelings, their advantage, their disadvantage, and the release from them (DN I 17). Other discourses indicate that the Buddha claimed to have reached full awakening only when he directly knew according to reality, *yathābhūtaṃ abhaññāsiṃ*, a range of different insights. These cover direct knowledge according to reality of:

- the advantage, disadvantage, and release in regard to the four elements (SN II 170 and SN II 172);
- the advantage, disadvantage, and release in regard to the five aggregates of clinging (SN III 28 and SN III 29);

- the nature, the arising, the cessation, and the path leading to the cessation of the five aggregates of clinging (SN III 59);
- the advantage, disadvantage, and release in regard to the six senses and their objects (SN IV 7 and SN IV 8; or SN IV 9 and SN IV 10; cf. also SN V 206);
- the advantage, disadvantage, and release in regard to the five faculties (SN V 204);
- and the advantage, disadvantage, and release in regard to the world, *loka* (AN I 259).

In this way, these discourses work out in detail various aspects of the comprehensive direct knowledge in accordance with reality that the Buddha attained on the night of his awakening. Had this knowledge and vision been only an intellectual appreciation, one might wonder how a single insight could cover such a range of different topics. As the treatment in the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta* shows, however, this was not the case, since the knowledge and vision according to reality attained by the Buddha involved a progression from initial insight, via a process of development, to retrospective knowledge of having reached full realization. Such full realization, then, can be described from a variety of angles, be these the noble truths, the elements, the aggregates, the senses, the faculties, or the world. All these would be but facets of the Buddha's comprehensive knowledge and vision according to reality, perfected on the night of his awakening. Thus the scope of the Buddha's awakening could be compared to a "circular vision, as when one is on top of a mountain ... however different the sceneries may be from the different directions, all the scenes constitute one integrated experience" if viewed from the perspective of one who stands on top of the mountain (de Silva 1987: 49).

Another aspect of the same perfection of knowledge on the night of his awakening is the Buddha's endowment with the

ten powers of a Tathāgata. These also involve forms of knowledge that are in accordance with reality. According to the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*, the Buddha knows according to reality, *yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*, what is possible and what is impossible; karma and its result; the way to any [rebirth] destination; the various elements that make up the world; the different inclinations of beings; the faculties of beings; and various aspects related to the attainment of concentration and realization (MN I 69).

The remaining three higher knowledges out of the entire set of ten powers also qualify as forms of *yathābhūtañāṇa* (AN III 420), so that the entire set of the ten powers of a Tathāgata can be seen as yet another pointer to the profundity of the knowledge and vision according to reality that resulted from the Buddha's awakening.

11.4 The Development of *Yathābhūtañāṇadassana*

The indication given in the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta* that there are different levels of knowledge and vision according to reality is echoed in other discourses, which similarly indicate that there are stages of growth in regard to knowledge that is in accordance with reality. Thus a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* distinguishes between becoming one who has "mastered knowledge", *vedagū*, and one who has attained "total victory", *sabbajī* (SN IV 83). Here "mastery of knowledge" comes through knowing according to reality the arising and passing away, as well as the advantage, disadvantage and release in regard to the six spheres of contact. But only one who through such knowledge has become liberated can be reckoned as having attained "total victory".

One who knows according to reality, *yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*, the arising and passing away, as well as the advantage, disad-

vantage and release in regard to the five faculties, can become a stream-enterer. When the same type of knowing develops further until it becomes a complete and full experience according to reality, *yathābhūtaṃ viditvā*, total liberation will be attained (SN V 194). That is, while the scope of insight and its truthfulness to reality remain the same, the deepening of such knowledge through continuous practice will lead from lower to higher stages of liberation.

In point of fact, even one who has clearly seen with right wisdom and according to reality that the cessation of becoming is *Nibbāna* need not be an *arahant*, but could have 'only' reached a lower level of awakening. He or she would then be in a situation similar to a thirsty man who sees water down below in a well but has neither rope nor bucket enabling them to reach the water and drink it (SN II 118). This goes to show that knowledge and vision according to reality can reach various levels of maturity, corresponding to different degrees of realization.

Even in the case of the Buddha, stages in the development of his knowledge and vision according to reality can be discerned. According to the autobiographic report about the time of his own struggle for awakening, even at a time when he had clearly seen with right wisdom and according to reality that sensual objects provide little satisfaction, he had not yet gone beyond their attraction (MN I 92). This only happened when his insight into the lack of satisfaction of sensual objects was complemented by experiencing a form of happiness that is beyond the senses (to be gained through the development of deeper stages of concentration). This in turn, then, formed the basis for the knowledge and vision according to reality perfected on the occasion of his awakening, as described in the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta.*

The development of concentration is in fact an important requirement for knowledge and vision according to reality to grow to its full potential, together with the need to be endowed with mindfulness. The need for mindfulness is reflected in a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, which treats Anuruddha's possession of some of the powers of a Tathāgata. According to this discourse, Anuruddha's abilities in this respect were the outcome of his practice of the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s (SN V 304). Since the ten powers involve forms of knowledge and vision according to reality, this discourse points to a central tool for arriving at knowledge and vision that accords with reality, namely the development of mindfulness.

This is also reflected in the instructions given in relation to contemplation of the four noble truths in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* which explicitly speak of knowing in accordance with reality, *yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti* (MN I 62). Though in relation to the remaining contemplations the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* speaks only of "knowing", *pajānāti*, without explicitly employing the qualification *yathābhūta*, the chief task of developing mindfulness is precisely becoming aware of things as they truly are. Another passage on *satipaṭṭhāna* practice explicitly uses the expression *yathābhūta* for contemplation of the body (SN V 144), thereby confirming that the aim of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice is the development of knowledge according to reality.

Besides the need for mindfulness, one needs to also dwell secluded, *paṭisallīna*, in order to be able to know things according to reality (SN III 15; SN IV 80; SN IV 145; SN V 414). Seclusion is closely related to the development of mental tranquillity, hence it comes as no surprise to find that concentration is often reckoned the requirement par excellence for knowledge and vision according to reality. One who is concentrated will naturally see and know according to reality (AN V

3). This is so much the case that concentration can be reckoned the proximate cause for knowledge and vision according to reality (SN II 31).

A concentrated mind is free from the five hindrances, and it is this absence that is of particular relevance for being able to know and see according to reality. A set of similes eloquently expresses this by comparing the effect of the hindrances on the mind to water in a bowl that is in such a condition as to make it impossible to see one's own reflection in the water. If the water is coloured, boiling, overgrown with algae, rippling, or muddy, one would be unable to know and see according to reality (SN V 121 and AN III 230). The same is the case when a hindrance is present in the mind. Therefore only a concentrated mind can know and see according to reality. The arising of a hindrance in the mind is in turn closely related to conduct and virtue, hence those endowed with virtuous conduct will be able to see and know according to reality, *caraṇasampanno yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passati* (AN II 163).

The need for a strong base in concentration points to a difference between knowledge and vision according to reality, *yathābhūtañāṇadassana*, and the otherwise closely related *yoniso manasikāra*, "attention" that is "wise" or "thorough". Generally speaking, the two qualities of wise attention and of knowledge and vision according to reality are closely related to each other, in fact the qualification *yoniso* has much in common with the import of *yathābhūta*. Thus, for example, to direct wise attention to the aggregates of clinging or to the senses leads to contemplating their impermanence according to reality, *yoniso manasi karotha ... yathābhūtaṃ samanupassatha* (SN III 52 and SN IV 142). In such contexts, *yoniso manasikāra* stands for the deployment of wise attention during deeper stages of meditation.

Elsewhere, however, wise attention also covers forms of attention that take place at a conceptual or reflective level of the mind, and therefore are less in need of a firm basis of concentration. In fact wise attention serves as nutriment − in the sense of providing a foundation − for mindfulness and clear comprehension, *sati-sampajañña*, and for the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s (AN V 118), which in turn are the basis for developing knowledge and vision according to reality. Thus wise attention provides the foundation for developing the kind of mindful observation that, if supported by a concentrated mind, will issue in knowledge and vision according to reality.

This qualitative difference can be seen in a passage that describes how someone comes to hear the teachings, establishes wise attention and thereon engages in practice according to the teachings. This then enables him or her to know according to reality what is wholesome and what is unwholesome (DN II 215). Clearly, this passage describes progressive stages where knowledge according to reality builds on wise attention.

Thus wise attention appears to be somewhat broader in its scope, in that it also covers mental activities taking place at a comparatively less concentrated level of the mind, which would not suffice for the development of knowledge and vision according to reality. In fact, it is based on having developed wise attention that concentration arises, and a mind concentrated in this way then knows and sees in accordance with reality, *yoniso manasikaroto ... samādhiyati, samāhitena cittena yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passati* (DN III 288).

Such knowing and seeing in accordance with reality will in turn result in disenchantment and dispassion, and thereby lead to liberation. With liberation attained, knowledge and vision turn into "knowledge and vision of liberation", *vimuttiñāṇadassana* (AN V 311).

Besides its potential of leading to liberation, the development of knowledge and vision according to reality also constitutes a source of joy in itself. Thus to see with right wisdom and in accordance with reality that sense-objects are impermanent and unable to provide lasting satisfaction, *yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato*, will result in the joy of renunciation, *nekkhammasita somanassa* (MN III 217). One who sees in accordance with reality the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of the five aggregates of clinging will experience such happiness that he or she can be reckoned as appeased in this respect, *tadaṅganibbuta* (SN III 43). When one knows and sees experience in accordance with reality, the very fading away of ignorance is a source of happiness and joy (DN II 215).

The scope of knowledge and vision according to reality covers the true characteristics of reality and thus often stands for knowing something from the perspective of its arising, its passing away, its advantage, its disadvantage and the release from it. Insight into impermanence is a central aspect in the development of knowledge and vision according to reality, in fact to have clearly seen according to reality and with proper wisdom the changing nature of all conditioned phenomena is one of the powers with which those who have destroyed the influxes are endowed (DN III 283).

To purify one's vision through awareness of impermanence could take place through knowledge that accords with reality of the arising and passing away of the six sense-spheres, of the five aggregates of clinging, of the four elements, or simply of the fact that whatever arises is of a nature to cease (SN IV 192). One who thus knows according to reality the arising and passing away of all that is subject to *dukkha* will dwell free from desire and discontent (SN IV 188).

Knowing according to reality the impermanent nature of the five aggregates of clinging naturally leads to knowing their unsatisfactory and selfless nature, their conditioned nature and their nature to pass away (SN III 57). One who sees all aggregates according to reality will transcend future existence (Th 87); in fact even just seeing the nature of the body according to reality will already lead beyond all sensual desire (Thī 90; see also Thī 85). Seeing with proper wisdom and according to reality the selfless nature of the five aggregates of clinging features prominently in the *Anattalakkhaṇa-sutta*, the occasion when the first five disciples of the Buddha reached full liberation (SN III 68).

The central idea conveyed by knowledge and vision according to reality is thus seeing whatever comes within the purview of the mind as it truly is or as it has come into being. A discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* gives a remarkable presentation of knowledge, *ñāṇa*, that can be reckoned as *yathābhūta*. According to this discourse, knowledge that accords with reality requires knowing that something is there when it is there, and knowing that something is not there when it is not there, *santaṃ vā 'atthī'ti ñassati, asantaṃ vā 'natthī'ti ñassati* (AN V 36). Or else one should be able to know what is inferior or superior, and what is surpassable or unsurpassable. As the same discourse quite emphatically points out, such *yathābhūtañāṇa* is supreme among all forms of knowledge, as no other type of knowledge could be more excellent or sublime (AN V 37).

This discourse thus highlights a central feature of knowledge and vision according to reality: the type of knowledge and vision that according to early Buddhism leads to the highest spiritual perfection does not involve a deeper intuition of a mystical and ineffable essence hidden behind reality, but rather is a sober and clear apperception of reality itself, of phenom-

ena in the world as they truly are. As the above survey of the compass of knowledge and vision shows, supernormal experiences gained through sustained meditative practice were certainly known and developed by the early disciples of the Buddha. Yet, the sober vision of everyday phenomena as they come into being and pass away – conditioned as they are and devoid of true satisfaction and without a permanent core – is far superior to any such feat. Such knowledge and vision is most excellent and sublime, since it is this type of knowledge and vision that will eventually result in the breakthrough to *Nibbāna*.

In spite of the rather simple appearance that such knowledge of phenomena according to reality may give at first sight, to be able to develop the type of knowledge that is indeed in accordance with reality is quite a demanding task, since it requires cutting through self-deception. This is required because, in a way, the scope of knowledge and vision according to reality could be said to be 'oneself'.

Whether the mode adopted for developing knowledge and vision according to reality is based on the five aggregates of clinging, or on the six sense-spheres etc., the point of developing such knowledge is to know and see the true nature of oneself as it "has come to be" and "according to reality". To truly know and see oneself requires maintaining the perspective of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self throughout all aspects and moments of subjective experience, thereby withstanding the pressure of the affective investment inherent in one's self-image and in the way one's perceptions tend to construct an image of the 'world'.

In the ordinary case, witnessing one's own shortcomings easily leads to unconscious attempts at reducing the resulting feeling of discomfort by avoiding or even altering the perceived

information to make it more congruent to one's view of oneself. Knowledge and vision according to reality, however, requires seeing and knowing 'according to reality', that is, remaining aloof from the influence of projections and expectations.

The relevance of knowledge that accords with reality to self-inspection is reflected in the *Anaṅgana-sutta*, which points out that one who does not know according to reality that a blemish is present within him or her will not strive to overcome it; and one who does not know according to reality that he or she is free from blemishes will not take the appropriate measures in order to protect this level of purity (MN I 25). These two cases can be compared to a dirty bronze dish that is not cleaned and to a clean bronze dish that, by not being cleaned or used, becomes dirty.

It is noteworthy that the analysis in the *Anaṅgana-sutta* gives more importance to the presence of knowledge according to reality than to the presence of a blemish as such. The reason is that even one who at present is free of blemish, but does not possess such self-knowledge, stands good chances to adopt a type of conduct that will lead to the arising of blemishes. Thus the presence of knowledge that accords with reality is the crucial factor for future progress, even more important than the degree to which one may be under the influence of defilements at a particular moment of one's practice. Such knowledge in accordance with reality gives self-inspection the power to recognize the presence or absence of mental blemishes "as they have come to be", thereby forming the indispensable basis for adopting the appropriate type of conduct in regard to both situations. Endowed with such knowledge, sooner or later any blemish of the mind can be overcome, however strong or persistent it may appear to be.

But those who are overwhelmed by ignorance will be unable to know according to reality if a particular way of undertaking things results in future suffering (MN I 311). Those who do not know according to reality the nature of perception, failing to distinguish between the types of perception that lead downwards and those that uplift, will be unable to reach liberation (AN II 167). Hence the development of some degree of knowledge and vision that is in accordance with reality is of fundamental importance for being able to avoid unwholesome conduct and for progress on the path to awakening.

To clearly see according to reality and with proper wisdom is also the means to go beyond views (MN I 40). In fact, speculative views about the future existence of a liberated being can only arise if one does not know or see the five aggregates of clinging according to reality (SN IV 386). Seeing dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*, according to reality and with proper wisdom, enables one to leave behind all speculation about the existence of a self in past and future times (SN II 26). Hence the wise, who see dependent arising, see karma as it has come to be and are knowledgeable in matters relating to its fruition (Sn 653). The world by and large is entangled in affirming or denying existence, but those who have seen according to reality and with proper wisdom the arising and passing away of the world, have gone beyond these two extremes (SN II 17). Being endowed with proper view, they stand on the threshold to the deathless (SN II 80).

"Those who have been quenched in the world,
Had insight in accordance with reality."

Ye cāpi nibbutā loke
yathābhūtaṃ vipassisuṃ (DN III 196).

12. Liberation / *Vimutti*

"Liberation", *vimutti*, is the final goal of the early Buddhist path and hence the ultimate purpose of the entire *Dhamma*. In order to explore the various facets of liberation, I will at first survey the eight deliverances, *vimokkha* (12.1), followed by turning to liberation of the mind (12.2). Next I examine the five occasions for attaining liberation, *vimuttāyatana* (12.3) and the different types of liberated beings (12.4). In the final section, I turn to the path to liberation (12.5).

12.1 The Eight Deliverances

In the Pāli discourses, the term *vimokkha*, "deliverance", occurs at times on a par with *vimutti*, "liberation". In a more specific sense, however, *vimokkha* stands for the eight types of deliverances.

The eight types of *vimokkha* are eight levels of "deliverance" that involve progressive degrees of mastery in the realm of concentration meditation in particular, with only the last deliverance bearing a direct relation to the development of insight. Though the final goal of deliverance or liberation requires going beyond any attainment in the sphere of tranquillity, early Buddhism nevertheless recognizes and treats in considerable detail levels of deliverance that fall short of being the final goal. Thus the eight deliverances form part of listings of the essentials of the Buddha's teaching provided in the *Saṅgīti-sutta* and the *Dasuttara-sutta* (DN III 262 and DN III 288), the

latter specifying that these deliverances "should be realized", *sachikātabbā*.

The degree to which the eight deliverances were considered an integral part of the early Buddhist path of practice is in fact reflected in several discourses. Thus the *Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta* compares the Buddha's ability to teach these eight deliverances to the ability of the trainer of an elephant, a horse, or an ox. While such a trainer only teaches the animals how to proceed in one of the four directions, the Buddha's disciples learn how to proceed towards eight directions, which are the eight deliverances (MN III 222).

A listing of various practices that lead to overcoming defilements includes the eight deliverances (AN IV 349); and according to the *Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta* many disciples of the Buddha reached direct knowledge through attaining these eight deliverances (MN II 12).

Hence one who develops the eight deliverances even for a short fraction of time does the teacher's bidding, and would not be eating the country's alms food in vain (AN I 40). The ability to attain these eight is the distinctive mark of an *arahant* liberated both ways, *ubhatobhāga-vimutto*, who is able to attain the eight deliverances in forward and backward order (DN II 71).These eight deliverances comprise (DN II 112 or AN IV 306):

1) seeing material forms while being possessed of material form, *rūpī rūpāni passati*;
2) seeing forms externally while being percipient of no materiality internally, *ajjhattaṃ arūpasaññī bahiddhā rūpāni passati*;
3) being resolved upon the beautiful, *'subhan't'eva adhimutto hoti*;
4) attaining the sphere of boundless space;

5) attaining the sphere of boundless consciousness;
6) attaining the sphere of nothingness;
7) attaining the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception;
8) attaining the cessation of perceptions and feelings.

The Pāli discourses that present this listing of the eight deliverances do not provide further information on their implications. According to an explanation given in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, the first deliverance involves developing the perception of a colour like blue, yellow, red, or white. This colour, or more precisely the 'sign' of this colour, the *nimitta*, is at first to be given attention "internally" on oneself, *ajjhatta paccatta*. Once this has been well developed the same coloured sign is to be given attention "externally", *bahiddhā*, leading to a perception of materiality in terms of the respective colour internally as well as externally (Paṭis II 38).

The *Atthasālinī* further specifies that to perceive a colour internally refers to developing a *jhāna* based on taking a colour of some part of one's own body as the object (As 190). Thus to develop perception of the colour 'blue', the hair, bile or the pupil of the eye should be used; for 'yellow' the fat, the skin or the yellow spot of the eyes; for 'red' the flesh, the blood, the tongue, the palms of the hand and feet or the red of the eyes; and for 'white' the bones, the teeth, the nails, or the white of the eye.

Next, according to the *Atthasālinī*'s explanation, the *jhānic* vision of these colours should be developed externally by way of a *kasiṇa* meditation object. The second of the eight deliverances would then represent the case of someone who does not develop the internal vision of colours described under the first deliverance, but instead directly proceeds to develop the vision of these colours with the help of an external device.

The interpretation offered in the *Atthasālinī* seems somewhat forced. For example, it is not easy to imagine how someone uses the white colour of his or her own bones as a meditation object, unless one has just had a type of accident that renders the bones visible, but then the repercussions of such a condition on one's physical well-being would probably make it difficult to develop the vision of the white bones into a deeper level of concentration. The same would to a lesser extent also apply to looking at one's own flesh or blood in order to develop a perception of redness. For a monk or a nun to be able to look directly at the hair of their own head, *kesa*, would also not be an easy task, as due to regularly shaving their hair would not be long enough to be seen directly.

It is also not clear how such hair or even bile could be perceived as blue; or how the dark skin of an Indian could be perceived as yellow or, in the case of the palms, as red; or how one would be able to see colours in the pupil of one's own eye. All these visions would only be possible if one were to resort to an external aid such as a mirror, in which case the use of another external object of the respective colour would be more straightforward. Besides, by resorting to a mirror the distinction drawn in the *Atthasālinī* between internal and external visions would be lost.

Thus the *Atthasālinī*'s explanation of the first and second deliverance seems contrived, perhaps being modelled on the eight spheres of transcendence, *abhibhāyatana*, several of which do involve external visions of forms whose colour is blue, yellow, red or white (e.g. DN III 260).

An alternative explanation of the first two deliverances could be gathered from the *Mahāvibhāṣā* and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (T XXVII 437c29 and T XXV 215a14). These works agree with the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and the *Atthasālinī*

that the first deliverance takes parts of one's body as its object, such as hair, bones, flesh, etc. They differ in as much as these objects are not to be seen directly, but rather are to be contemplated in a recollective manner from the perspective of the unattractiveness and impure nature of these parts of one's body.

Once the first deliverance has been developed in this way, the same mode of contemplation is then to be undertaken in relation to the bodies of others, which, when carried out successfully, constitutes the second deliverance. The *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* indicates that to progress in this way from the first to the second deliverance is to proceed from at first having reached some degree of freedom from conceit and attachment in relation to one's own bodily appearance to subsequently developing a similar degree of freedom from attraction and passion in regard to the bodies of others (T XXV 215a16),

The undertaking of such recollective contemplation of the anatomical parts of the body is described in detail in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* (MN I 57), according to which one should "review", *paccavekkhati*, the whole body from the soles of the feet to the top of the head in terms of the various types of impurity such as hair, flesh, bone etc. Similar to the progression from the first to the second deliverance, the *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions also proceed from contemplating one's own body, *ajjhatta*, to contemplation of the bodies of others, *bahiddhā*.

In both cases, one need not actually see these different parts, which in the case of bones etc. would require supernormal powers or surgery, but one mentally reviews the constitution of the physical body to the extent to which one is familiar with it. In order to facilitate such familiarity, the *Visuddhimagga* offers a detailed description of various anatomical parts to be reviewed in this manner (Vism 248 - 265). According to a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, to review the anatomical con-

stitution of the body in the way described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* leads to the perception of unattractiveness, *asubha-saññā* (AN V 109).

The *Mahāvibhāṣā* then explains that, once the perception of unattractiveness has been developed, the third deliverance comes into its place to counterbalance excessive disgust and negativity, by developing perception of what is beautiful, *subha* (T XXVII 437c28). In sum, in this way a meaningful progression for the first three deliverances could be reached.

On reading the bare instructions given in the Pāli discourses, one would perhaps not come to the conclusion that the first two deliverances require contemplation of the body's nature as bereft of beauty, *asubha*. Yet, the idea that they refer to some form of *kasiṇa* meditation would also not naturally come to a reader who is not familiar with the explanations given in the *Atthasālinī*. When compared with the latter, the suggestions given in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* appear more straightforward and practically feasible. They also result in a coherent dynamics of development for the first three deliverances.

According to the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, to be resolved upon the beautiful, the third of the eight deliverances, requires the development of the four divine abodes, *brahmavihāra*, as a liberation of the mind in the form of a boundless radiation. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* explains that due to such development beings appear as non-repulsive, *appaṭikula*, hence one has reached the liberation of being resolved upon the beautiful (Paṭis II 39). The *Atthasālinī*, however, understands the third deliverance to refer to *jhāna* attainment through a colour device that is thoroughly purified (As 191). This gloss is noteworthy as it shows the degree to which the explanations in the *Atthasālinī* are influenced by the idea of *kasiṇa* meditation, so

much so that the *Atthasālinī* would even venture to go against the otherwise highly respected exposition given in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga.*

A discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* relates loving kindness alone to the "beautiful deliverance", *subha vimokkha* (SN V 119), whereas the other three divine abodes lead to the subsequent types of deliverances, namely those related to the first three immaterial spheres. The *Pāṭika-sutta* clarifies that at the time of having attained the beautiful deliverance one will not perceive phenomena as 'ugly', but rather as 'beautiful' (DN III 34). The commentary then explains that this passage refers to an attainment that is based on a colour device, *vaṇṇa-kasiṇa* (Sv III 830), thereby again opting for an explanation that involves *kasiṇa* meditation, somewhat against the indications provided by the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* discourse.

From the perspective of the explanation of the first two deliverances given in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, however, the practice of loving kindness would fit the series well, since the development of loving kindness would indeed counterbalance any negativity that might have arisen through excessive contemplation of the repulsive nature of one's own body or that of others. The contrast provided in the *Pāṭika-sutta* between perceiving phenomena as ugly or as beautiful could also be related to this topic, in the sense of highlighting that with the third deliverance the perceptions of lack of beauty, *asubha*, that had been developed earlier, are now definitely left behind.

Whatever may be the final word on the implications of the first three deliverances, the remaining set is quite straightforward. Deliverances four to seven involve the attainment of the four immaterial spheres. In practical terms, based on the mental stability of the fourth *jhāna* any perception related to ma-

teriality or diversity is to be overcome in order to attain the sphere of boundless space. Next the experience of space is attended to from the perspective of the consciousness that experiences the sphere of boundless space, which then leads to attaining the sphere of boundless consciousness. Giving attention to the cessation aspect of the experience of boundless consciousness leads to attaining the sphere of nothingness. Further practice results in subduing perceptions until a state is reached which can neither be reckoned as percipient nor as non-percipient, this being the entry into the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

With the final of the eight deliverances, the sense of true liberation from a Buddhist perspective comes to the fore, as the cessation of perception and feeling would require the development of insight up to the level of non-return or *arahant*-hood (AN III 194 and Vism 702).

12.2 Liberation of the Mind

Similar to the case of *vimokkha*, the Pāli term *vimutti*, "liberation", covers both final liberation through the destruction of all unwholesomeness as well as types of liberation that fall short of being the ultimate goal in early Buddhism. The discourses express the idea of a gradation of types of liberation by distinguishing *vimokkha* (which in the present context is employed as an equivalent to *vimutti*) into three types: "worldly", *sāmisa*, "unworldly", *nirāmisa*, and "more unworldly than unworldly", *nirāmisā nirāmisatara* (SN IV 237). Here the worldly type stands for experiences of liberation or deliverance related to the four *jhāna*s. Its unworldly counterpart covers attainment of the immaterial spheres; while the type of *vimokkha* that is more unworldly than unworldly is retrospective knowledge of the successful deliverance of the mind from passion, anger and delusion.

Before proceeding, it needs to be noted that the use of the qualifications "worldly" and "unworldly" in this passage is best understood relatively, as the same discourse also applies the qualification "unworldly" to the *jhāna*s. Thus the *jhāna*s of the form sphere are considered as a "worldly" type of deliverance only in comparison to more sublime types of deliverances.

Instances of the first of these three levels of liberation or deliverance would be the divine abodes, *brahmavihāra*, whose boundless radiation into all directions constitutes a "liberation of the mind", *cetovimutti*. During such a liberation based on the divine abodes one is 'liberated' from hostility and ill-will, *avera* and *avyāpajjha* (e.g. MN I 38). The absence of hostility and ill-will is envisaged for each of the four divine abodes, in the sense that each of these four transcends, in its own particular way, the limitations imposed by those two unwholesome mental qualities.

Of the four divine abodes, it is in particular liberation of the mind through loving kindness that is most prominently the "escape", *nissaraṇa*, from ill-will, *vyāpāda*. Loving kindness has a remarkable potential to liberate the mind from the influence of ill-will. This is the case to such an extent that it is impossible to say of someone who has developed loving kindness as a liberation of the mind that ill-will still invades his or her mind and remains (DN III 248). Liberation of the mind through "compassion", *karuṇā*, performs the same function in regard to "vexation", *vihesā*; liberation of the mind through "sympathetic joy", *muditā*, in regard to "discontent", *arati*; and liberation of the mind through "equanimity", *upekkhā*, in regard to "passion", *rāga*.

Due to such different aspects in the effect and also in the actual experience of liberation of the mind by way of any of the four divine abodes, each can be reckoned as a type of lib-

eration of the mind in its own right, hence there are *mettā cetovimutti, karuṇā cetovimutti, muditā cetovimutti* and *upekkhā cetovimutti* (DN III 248).

The experience of these types of liberation of the mind is moreover a liberation from any confines, as the mind radiates the respective divine abode into all possible directions, above and below, until one's experience becomes truly great and unbounded, *mahaggata* and *appamāṇa*. The expression *appamāṇā cetovimutti*, "boundless liberation of the mind", quite appropriately reflects such unbounded radiation (MN III 146).

An image provided in the discourses illustrates this all-pervasive nature of a boundless liberation of the mind with the example of a trumpeter able to make himself heard in all four directions (e.g. MN II 207). Liberation of the mind through the divine abodes is unlimited not only in a spatial sense, but also from a karmic perspective, as any limiting action cannot persist and remain, *yaṃ pamāṇakataṃ kammaṃ, na taṃ tatrāvasissati, na taṃ tatrāvatiṭṭhati*. The commentaries explain that the karmic fruit to be expected of the development of liberation of the mind through the divine abodes will temporarily overrule the negative karmic influence of another and more 'limited' deed belonging to the sensuous field (Ps III 449). Thus "just as petty small noises get drowned by the all-pervading sound of a conch-shell, petty emotions such as attachment and aversion associated with sense data find no foothold in a well developed mind suffused with infinite benevolence" (de Silva 1978: 124).

The fruitfulness of loving kindness as a liberation of the mind is of such superior degree that it could be compared to the radiance of the moon that outshines the light of any other star, or to the rising sun that dispels all darkness, or to the rise of the morning star at dawn (It 19). Liberation of the mind through loving kindness can even become a means of progress

towards non-return (AN V 300), and its practice certainly helps to weaken the fetters (AN IV 150 and It 21).

In fact, all of the divine abodes can become tools for progress to the highest liberation, *uttarivimutti*, once they are combined with the development of the factors of awakening (SN V 119). In regard to liberation of the mind through loving kindness in particular, other and somewhat more mundane benefits of its undertaking are that one will sleep well and wake up well; one will not be disturbed by evil dreams and be protected from hostile actions by others; one will find it easy to concentrate; one will have a pleasant countenance and be liked by men and other beings; one will pass away without confusion and be reborn in a non-sensual heavenly world (AN V 342; see also AN IV 150).

Liberation of the mind through loving kindness will also be of protective assistance when having to face non-human beings (SN II 264), whereas liberation of the mind through sympathetic joy appears to be particularly related to communal harmony (AN I 243).

Thus, even though this type of liberation of the mind falls short of being the final goal, its ‘liberating’ effects are remarkable. These cover mental freedom in a spatial as well as emotional sense, and lead to temporary freedom from the effects of some type of unwholesome karmic retribution as well as to freedom from such unpleasant experiences as sleepless nights, bad dreams and hostile attitudes by others. In view of this range of ‘liberating’ effects, it becomes quite understandable why the development and benefits of the practice of the divine abodes as boundless liberations of the mind has been given so much attention in the Pāli discourses.

A related type of liberation of the mind would be the "liberation of the mind that has become great", *mahaggatā cetovimut-*

ti, which designates the ability to pervade a certain area with one's meditation object, be this the area around the root of a tree, the area of a whole village, or even the area of the whole earth (MN III 146). The fact that "liberation of the mind that has become great" is distinguished from "boundless liberation of the mind" suggests that its meditative pervasion would involve some other meditation object, which according to the commentarial explanation is the development of *jhāna* based on a *kasiṇa* object (Ps IV 200).

Yet another type of liberation of the mind is the "neither-painful-nor-pleasant liberation of the mind", *adukkhamasukhā cetovimutti*, which stands for the mental freedom attained with the fourth absorption, *jhāna* (MN I 296). In this case the 'liberating' feature is no longer related to any spatial pervasion, but to the fact that through attaining the fourth *jhāna* the mind has become 'liberated' by attaining immovability, *aniñjita* (MN I 455). The mind has thereby become totally aloof from the pleasure-pain dichotomy, whose transcendence is the very precondition for entry into fourth *jhāna* attainment, *sukhassa ca pahānā, dukkhassa ca pahānā, pubb' eva somanassa-domanassānaṃ atthagamā* (e.g. DN I 75).

Based on the mental strength of the fourth *jhāna*, the immaterial attainments can be developed, which correspond to four types of deliverances, *vimokkha*, in the eightfold standard listing. Out of these four, the attainment of the sphere of nothingness is also reckoned as a type of liberation of the mind on its own, the *akiñcaññā cetovimutti* (MN I 297). According to the description given in the discourses, to attain this type of mental liberation requires giving attention to nothingness, *n'atthi kiñci* (e.g. MN I 41).

The *Āneñjasappāya-sutta* depicts three additional modes that lead to the sphere of nothingness, the first of which involves

the reflection that the cessation of all perceptions is peaceful; the second requires insight into selflessness; and the third is based on contemplating that one does not belong to anything or own anything (MN II 263).

The first of these three involves perceiving the cessation of all perceptions as peaceful and thus bears some relation to another type of liberation, the "mental liberation through signlessness", *animittā cetovimutti* (given that the counterpart to any perception, *saññā*, is the "sign", *nimitta*, of what is perceived). Such mental liberation through signlessness is the escape from all signs (DN III 249; see in more detail Harvey 1986). Its attainment requires not giving attention to any sign and directing awareness to the signless element (MN I 297).

The expression "signless deliverance", *animitta vimokkha*, further qualified to be also a "deliverance" related to "emptiness", *suññata vimokkha*, occurs in two *Dhammapada* verses that clearly intend the attainment of final liberation (Dhp 92-93). Concentration on signlessness is in fact one of the different paths to the deathless (SN IV 360). Yet, meditative experiences of signlessness can also be related to lesser levels of development. This can be seen from a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, which describes how a monk might pride himself on having attained concentration of the mind that is signless, but then through over socializing comes under the influence of passion and eventually disrobes (AN III 397). Hence the signless liberation of the mind also covers types of liberation that are only temporary.

This is in fact the distinguishing mark of the types of liberation of the mind discussed so far, in that they do not in themselves imply the attainment of a liberation that is perpetual, but may only be of a temporary type, *sāmāyika*. That is, by having attained a liberation of the mind one has not necessarily gone

beyond the reach of Māra (MN I 156). To be able to reach even a temporary liberation of the mind does require devotion to practice in seclusion (MN III 110 and Sn 54), and is therefore a token of progress on the path (see also AN III 349 and AN V 139). Yet, such success is only temporary, as such liberation of the mind can be lost again.

This was apparently the case with Godhika, who according to a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* lost his liberation of the mind again and again (SN I 120). The commentary explains that this happened due to physical illness (Spk I 183). Other reasons for loss of temporary liberation of the mind are delight in excessive activity, talk, sleep and socialization; or else failing to properly examine the mind that has experienced a liberation (AN III 173).

The attainment of a temporary liberation of the mind can even become an obstruction to reaching the final goal, if due to such lofty experience one loses inspiration for progressing towards the cessation of personality and the destruction of ignorance (AN II 165). Such a predicament would be like taking hold of a branch that is smeared with resin. Hence such liberations of the mind should be developed and made use of without allowing that the sticky resin of attachment prevents letting go of them when the time has come to progress towards final liberation.

A temporary liberation of the mind also appears to be intended by the expression "noble liberation", *ariyā vimutti*, which a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* defines as a manifestation of the faculty of concentration, *samādhindriya* (SN V 223). Once the term "noble liberation" is additionally qualified as "foremost", *ariyā paramā vimutti*, however, it does stand for "supreme liberation", *adhivimutti* (DN I 174). The same is the case for the term "noble deliverance", *ariya vimokkha*, which

occurs in another discourse as a designation for final liberation through penetrative insight into not-self and the relinquishment of all clinging (MN II 265). A liberation of the mind that requires such penetrative insight into not-self is "the liberation of the mind through emptiness", *suññatā cetovimutti*. This is to be attained through contemplating that "this is empty of a self and what pertains to a self", *suññam idam attena vā attaniyena vā* (MN I 297).

Notably, the same insight into selflessness constitutes the second of the three modes that lead to the sphere of nothingness according to the *Āneñjasappāya-sutta* (MN II 263). Moreover, according to the *Mahāsuññata-sutta*, the Buddha would dwell in the attainment of internal emptiness by not giving attention to any signs, *sabbanimittānaṃ amanasikārā ajjhattaṃ suññataṃ upasampajja viharituṃ* (MN III 111). This points to some degree of relatedness between liberation of the mind through emptiness, *suññatā cetovimutti*, and the liberations of the mind through nothingness and through signlessness.

In fact, the boundless liberation of the mind and the liberations of the mind through nothingness and signlessness − *appamāṇā cetovimutti, akiñcaññā cetovimutti* and *animittā cetovimutti* − could be used as expressions to designate final and unshakeable liberation of the mind, *akuppā cetovimutti* (MN I 298). Final liberation goes beyond the "bounds" or "limits", *pamāṇa*, set by the three root defilements of passion, anger and delusion. At the same time it goes beyond their "somethingness", *kiñcana*, and their tendency to "make signs", *nimittakaraṇa*. Hence, when considered from this perspective, final liberation can indeed be qualified as a type of liberation of the mind that is boundless, that 'has' "nothing" and that is "signless", *appamāṇā*, *akiñcaññā* and *animittā*. Yet, of the different liberations of the mind considered so far, only liberation of the

mind through emptiness, *suññatā cetovimutti*, seems to stand unequivocally for what the Pāli discourses consider to be true and permanent liberation, namely liberation from the notion of a self and its concomitant defilements.

12.3 Occasions for Attaining Liberation

Five occasions for the break-through to liberating insight are collected in the discourses under the heading of "spheres of liberation", *vimuttāyatana* (DN III 241; DN III 279 and AN III 21). These take place:

1) when hearing the *Dhamma*;
2) when teaching the *Dhamma* to others;
3) when reciting the *Dhamma*;
4) when reflecting about the *Dhamma*;
5) during meditation.

The last reads more literally: "having well grasped some sign of concentration, having well given attention to it, having well held it [in one's mind], having well penetrated it with wisdom". Though in some Pāli discourses the "sign of concentration" stands for the vision of a corpse in decay (DN III 226 and AN II 17), the original intention of the description of the fifth sphere of liberation need not have been restricted to contemplating a corpse, but could be understood to comprise any sign of concentration that can be apprehended during meditation practice.

On each of these five occasions for liberation, what takes place, according to the description given in the Pāli discourses, is that one comes to have a direct grasp of the teachings in spirit and letter. Due to this delight and joy arise, which in turn lead to tranquillity and concentration.

Judging from this description, it seems that the direct grasp of the teachings arrived at by way of any of these five spheres of liberation brings into being three qualities that are also part of the standard listing of the factors of awakening: joy, *pīti*, tranquillity, *passaddhi*, and concentration, *samādhi*.

In the description of the consecutive development of the seven factors of awakening in the *Ānāpānasati-sutta*, these three are preceded by mindfulness and investigation-of-phenomena (MN III 85). If the parallelism between the awakening factors and the present description holds, then the process that leads up to and corresponds to the direct grasp of the teachings through any of these five spheres of liberation would correspond to the development of mindfulness and of investigation-of-phenomena.

The basic dynamic of development that ensues based on any of the five spheres of liberation is the same, thus what differentiates them into five is the way this development is triggered. The *Peṭakopadesa* clarifies that in the case of the first sphere of liberation the trigger is [the understanding that arises from] hearing the teachings, in the case of the second and the third spheres of liberation the decisive factor is consolidation [of one's understanding of the teachings] through teaching or reciting; the fourth sphere of liberation involves careful mental consideration when one reflects about the *Dhamma*; and the fifth sphere of liberation, actual meditation, leads to penetrating [the teachings] well with right view (Peṭ 233).

Descriptions of these five spheres of liberation in the *Dīrgha-āgama* preserved in Chinese translation differ in so far as they have an additional introductory statement, according to which these five spheres of liberation lead to liberation if one is energetic without remiss, delights in seclusion, and has devel-

oped mindfulness as well as a mind that is one-pointed (T I 51c3 and T I 53c15).

This stipulation makes it clear that to reach liberation requires more than just hearing the *Dhamma*, or else reciting it or reflecting about it. The point to be kept in mind here is that the five spheres of liberation represent occasions when mature practice may culminate in a break-through to liberating insight. They are not descriptions of the course of training that leads up to such a break-through. Previous training in virtue, concentration and wisdom would be required in order for the mind to reach that level of maturity where the occasions afforded by any of the five spheres of liberation can issue in liberation.

In agreement with the Pāli account, the *Dīrgha-āgama* presentation indicates that, through grasping the teachings on any of these five occasions, joy, tranquillity and concentration arise. The *Dīrgha-āgama* description continues after the stage of concentration by indicating that with a mind concentrated in this way one sees things according to reality (T I 51c9 and T I 53c20). This stipulation echoes a recurrent description in the Pāli discourses, according to which concentration leads to a vision of things according to reality, which then forms the basis for attaining liberation (e.g. AN V 3).

How seeing things as they truly are then leads on to actual liberation can be gathered from the descriptions of the five spheres of liberation given in the *Saṅgītiparyāya* and the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*. According to their account, disenchantment and dispassion arise based on such a vision of things according to reality, and it is through such disenchantment and dispassion that liberation takes place. (T XXVI 424a11 and Wogihara 1971: 54; also Pāsādika1990: 26). The *Saṅgītiparyāya* further explains that such vision of things according to reality is concerned with the four noble truths, a vision that

then leads to disenchantment in regard to the five aggregates of clinging. Through the ensuing dispassion, the three roots of evil – greed, hatred and delusion – will be overcome and liberation will be attained (T XXVI 425b1).

12.4 Liberated Beings

Progress towards final liberation proceeds through stages and may involve the development of other types of liberation to differing degrees. This variety of approaches is reflected in a listing of seven types of disciples (e.g. MN I 477):

- one who is liberated both ways,
- one who is liberated by wisdom,
- one who is a body-witness,
- one who has attained to view,
- one who is liberated by faith,
- one who is a *Dhamma*-follower,
- one who is a faith-follower.

Notably, one of these disciples is reckoned to be 'liberated' by faith, the *saddhāvimutta*. According to the definition given, someone liberated by faith has not developed the ability to attain the immaterial attainments and only some of his or her influxes have been eradicated (MN I 478). That is, someone liberated by faith could be a stream-enterer, a once-returner, or a non-returner (AN I 120). By having attained stream-entry at the very least, someone liberated by faith is 'liberated' from the prospect of any lower rebirth and also from the uncertainty of doubt and perplexity through being endowed with unwavering confidence, *aveccapasāda*, in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Saṅgha* (SN V 357).

The notion of being liberated by faith introduces a different aspect into the types of liberations discussed so far, which were the outcome of developing concentration and / or wis-

dom. Though concentration and wisdom are certainly also required for becoming one who is liberated by faith, the distinctive characteristic of this type of noble disciple is the prominence of the faculty of faith or confidence (AN I 118).

A higher level of liberation is reached by the one who is 'liberated' by wisdom, *paññāvimutta*. This refers to an *arahant* who has not developed the ability to attain the immaterial attainments (MN I 477), though he or she would nevertheless be well aware of their impermanent and ultimately unsatisfactory nature (DN II 70). This awareness could explain why someone liberated by wisdom may not make any further effort for developing the immaterial attainments, once final liberation has been won, since clear understanding of the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of such attainments would make any effort to attain them appear futile.

A discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* distinguishes different types of *arahant*s that are liberated by wisdom, according to their ability in the realm of concentration. In this discourse, the lowest type of being liberated by wisdom is able to attain the first *jhāna* (AN IV 452). This indicates that, at least from the perspective of this discourse, one liberated by wisdom would not be completely bereft of *jhāna* attainment. The same discourse does, however, also list someone liberated by wisdom who is able to attain the immaterial attainments, which is not easy to reconcile with the definition of an *arahant* liberated by wisdom given elsewhere.

The nature of one who is liberated by wisdom was apparently not easily appreciated by the Buddha's contemporaries. The *Susīma-sutta* reports the puzzlement of the wanderer Susīma in this respect, who had become a monk in order to spy out the Buddha's teaching. When other monks declared to have won final knowledge, Susīma was perplexed by the fact that

they were not able to avail themselves of supernatural powers, nor did they have the divine ear, telepathic knowledge of the mind of others, recollection of past lives, the divine eye, or the ability to enter the immaterial attainments (SN II 123).

His perplexity suggests that the early Buddhist conception of one who has been fully liberated by wisdom was unusual in the ancient Indian setting, where the attainment of the final goal was apparently associated with the ability of displaying supernormal abilities. In reply to Susīma's puzzlement, the Buddha clarified that it is insight, in the sense of knowledge of the stability of the *Dhamma*, *dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇa*, which is the precursor of the experience of *Nibbāna* (SN II 124). This reply highlights that the attainment of *Nibbāna* does not require the development of any supernatural powers. Instead, penetrative insight into the true nature of things is required,which then leads to liberation by higher knowledge, *aññāvimutti* (AN I 231).

Such penetrative insight is the distinctive mark of one who is liberated by wisdom, who has overcome all ignorance (Sn 847). From a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* one could get the impression that those who were liberated by wisdom were the most numerous type of *arahant*. At least on this occasion, sixty out of a congregation of five-hundred *arahant*s were endowed with the triple knowledge, sixty had the six higher knowledges, sixty were liberated both ways, but three-hundred-and-twenty were liberated by wisdom (SN I 191). This presentation also highlights that someone liberated by wisdom need not have developed the first two of the three higher knowledges, *tevijjā*, whose exercise requires the same mental strength of the mind that forms the basis for reaching the immaterial attainments, namely the fourth *jhāna*.

Another type of *arahant* mentioned in the above seven-fold listing of disciples is the one who is "liberated both ways",

ubhatobhāgavimutta. Such an *arahant* is able to attain the immaterial attainments (MN I 477), and therefore is perfected also in this respect (AN IV 316). He or she "has a more complete type of liberation because of his [or her] meditative skill" (Wynne 2002: 35). The *Mahānidāna-sutta* defines the same type of *arahant* in a slightly different manner by indicating that he or she has mastery over the eight deliverances (DN II 71). A complement to this can then be found in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, which describes an *arahant* bereft of the ability to attain all eight deliverances (AN II 87). This discourse compares such an *arahant* to a coloured lotus, whereas an *arahant* who attains all eight deliverances is like a white lotus. Thus the theme of this presentation is indeed the difference between those who are liberated by wisdom and those who are liberated both ways, a difference elsewhere said to be related to differences in their respective faculties, *indriyavemattatā* (MN I 437).

Though *arahant*s may differ in their degree of accomplishment in the realm of concentration, with the attainment of *arahant*-ship their liberation of the mind has become unshakeable, *akuppā cetovimutti*. When liberation of the mind is qualified as unshakeable it indeed stands for the final goal of early Buddhism, being a type of liberation that is no longer temporary.

During the course of the history of Buddhism, the final nature of this attainment eventually became a matter for discussion among different Buddhist schools, some of which developed the concept of an *arahant* who is liable to fall away again from his or her level of attainment, the *parihānadharma arhant* (Abhidh-k 6.56; see also Kv-a 37). This, however, appears to be a later development. In the Pāli discourses, once someone has reached the unshakeable liberation of the mind and liberation by wisdom, *akuppā cetovimutti paññāvimutti*, and has

thereby destroyed the influxes, no falling back from this level of liberation is envisaged.

12.5 The Path to Liberation

The Pāli discourses reckon the liberation of an *arahant* as a manifestation of "right liberation", *sammā vimutti*, being the fruit of a successful undertaking of the noble eightfold path and thus the very opposite of wrong types of liberation, *micchā vimutti.* Reaching such right liberation features as the last in a list of ten qualities of an *arahant*, preceded by the factors of the noble eightfold path and right knowledge, *sammā ñāṇa* (MN III 76).

It is noteworthy that in the Pāli discourses "right liberation", *sammā vimutti* is invariably preceded by "right knowledge", *sammā ñāṇa*, whereas in the Chinese *Āgamas* the opposite sequence prevails, as discourses in the *Dīrgha-āgama* (e.g. T I 57b17), in the *Madhyama-āgama* (e.g. T I 736b19) and in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* (e.g. T II 122c7) have right knowledge as the last in their listing, preceded by right liberation. The same sequence is also found in Sanskrit fragments of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* and the *Daśottara-sūtra* (Stache-Rosen 1968: 205 and Schlingloff 1962: 25.).

According to an explanation given in the *Madhyama-āgama* and in the *Saṃyukta-āgama*, right knowledge stands for the retrospective knowledge of having achieved right liberation (T I 736b19 and T II 198c11). This explanation squares with the Pāli commentaries, which explain right knowledge to represent reviewing knowledge, *paccavekkhaṇāñāṇam 'sammāñāṇaṃ' ti vuccati* (Ps I 189).

Following this explanation, it would indeed seem more suitable to list right knowledge after right liberation. This is in fact the case in another type of listing in the Pāli discourses where

the "aggregate of liberation", *vimuttikkhandha*, is followed by the "aggregate of knowledge and vision of liberation", *vimutti-ñāṇadassanakkhandha* (e.g. SN V 162). Yet, the same type of listing precedes the aggregate of liberation with the "aggregate of wisdom", *paññākkhandha*, so that perhaps the reference in the Pāli discourses to right knowledge as what precedes right liberation should be understood to represent the type of knowledge or wisdom that issues in liberation.

Whatever may be the final word on the proper sequence of listing right knowledge and right liberation, the type of knowledge and wisdom that will lead to unshakeable liberation needs to be in accordance with reality, *yathābhūta*, and has to generate disenchantment and dispassion. For knowledge to issue in liberation it needs to be based on right concentration and on a good foundation in ethical conduct, mindfulness and sense-restraint. All these factors are required for liberation, just as the foliage, branches and bark of a tree are required for the heartwood to come to maturity (AN IV 336). Yet, as the *Mahāsāropama-sutta* and the *Cūḷasāropama-sutta* clarify, none of these should be mistaken for being the final goal, which would be like mistaking foliage, branch or bark for the heartwood (MN I 197 and MN I 205). That is, the means should not be confused with the goal.

A complementary perspective on the requirements for liberation is given in the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*, which presents right view, virtuous conduct, learning, [suitable] conversation, tranquillity and insight as the factors that lead to liberation of the mind and liberation by wisdom (MN I 294). Perhaps the most important requirement for bringing about liberation are the seven factors of awakening, *bojjhaṅga*, whose liberating potential comes to the fore once they are developed based on se-

clusion, dispassion and cessation, in this way leading to letting go (MN III 88).

According to a listing of nine factors of exertion for purification in the *Dasuttara-sutta*, the purification to be attained through final liberation requires progress through the seven stages of purification, as well as through purification by wisdom, *paññāvisuddhi* (DN III 288). The *Sāmugiya-sutta* explains that purity of liberation, *vimuttipārisuddhi*, comes about when one touches right liberation after having developed dispassion and after having liberated the mind, *rajanīyesu dhammesu cittaṃ virājetvā, vimocanīyesu dhammesu cittaṃ vimocetvā, sammāvimuttiṃ phusati* (AN II 196).

This explanation is significant, since it shows that dispassion, *virāga*, though at times acting as a synonym for final liberation, in contexts like the present clearly stands for something that precedes actual liberation. In fact, a listing of recipients of offerings in the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga-sutta* quite explicitly speaks of an outsider who has reached dispassion towards sensual things, *bāhiraka kāmesu vītarāga* (MN III 255), a presentation that would evidently not imply that he had reached final liberation.

This provides the necessary background to a statement in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, which links dispassion, in the sense of the fading away of passion, to liberation of the mind, followed by relating the fading away of ignorance to liberation by wisdom, *rāgavirāgā cetovimutti, avijjāvirāgā paññāvimutti* (AN I 61). This presentation has at times been understood to represent two different paths that lead to two different types of liberation (see e.g. Gombrich 1996: 114). In the light of the above passages, however, the implications of this passage can be clarified. Dispassion, or the "fading away of passion", *rāgavirāga*, is indeed a precondition for liberation of the mind, *cetovimutti*,

which comprises various levels of liberation to be reached through the development of deeper stages of concentration. Such development, as the standard description of the first *jhāna* explicitly indicates, requires the leaving behind of all matters related to sensuality, *vivicc' eva kāmehi* (e.g. DN I 73).

Yet, such liberation of the mind through dispassion, which the above *Aṅguttara-nikāya* passage quite explicitly introduces as the outcome of the development of tranquillity, *samatha*, falls short of being the final goal, as it is only a temporary type of liberation. Final liberation additionally requires insight, *vipassanā*, which leads to the development of wisdom, *paññā bhāvīyati*, and to the removal of ignorance, *avijjā sā pahīyati* (AN I 61). Hence instead of intending two different paths to two different goals, what this passage in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* describes are two complementary aspects of the path to the final goal, one of which is incapable of leading to full liberation on its own.

The central point remains the removal of ignorance, and it is this removal which issues in being completely liberated by final knowledge, *sammadaññāvimutta* (MN III 30). With such final knowledge an inner state of deliverance has been reached, wherein all clinging is destroyed and all influxes are removed (SN II 54). Such liberation implies that delight and passion have been completely destroyed (SN III 51). Once liberation through non-clinging has been accomplished (SN II 18), the round [of faring on in *saṃsāra*] has been left behind for good (SN IV 391). In this way, liberation from being reckoned in terms of any of the five aggregates has been reached (MN I 487), and one has been liberated by the highest deliverance from perception (Sn 1071).

This highest deliverance from perception is none other than the experience of *Nibbāna*, which is the "counterpart" to lib-

eration (MN I 304), and the "resort" of liberation (SN V 218); wherefore *Nibbāna* is the very purpose of liberation (SN III 189).

A telling description of the liberating attainment of *Nibbāna* as the highest deliverance from perception is given by *bhikkhunī* Paṭācārā, who explains that just like the *Nibbāna* of her lamp, which she had just put out, so was the liberation of her mind (Thī 116).

To attain such liberation is to arrive at the very essence of all things, *vimuttisārā sabbe dhammā* (AN V 107). Such attainment is the very purpose all the teachings and instructions given by the Buddha. Just as the ocean has a single taste, namely the taste of salt, so the teachings of the Buddha have a single taste, namely the taste of liberation (Ud 56). With final liberation attained, the holy life has been lived and what had to be done has been done. The prospective of future birth has been eradicated and there will be no more coming to any state of being (e.g. DN I 84).

Having won liberation, the noble disciple has pierced this huge mass of ignorance just like a skilled warrior pierces huge objects with his arrow (AN II 202). The liberation attained in this manner is like the white awning of a chariot (SN IV 291); or like the final rubbing and grooming a horse trainer gives a horse that has been thoroughly trained and is worthy of being put to service by the king (MN I 446).

One who has reached liberation of the mind and liberation by wisdom has lifted up the cross-bar; has filled the moat; uprooted the pillar; withdrawn the bolts; lowered the banner; dropped the burden and is unfettered (AN III 84). Here the cross-bar stands for ignorance, the moat for faring on in *saṃsāra*, the pillar for craving, the bolts for the five lower fetters,

while the banner and the burden both represent the conceit 'I am'.

Just as a head-anointed king endowed with treasures, a strong army and wise counsellors is at home anywhere in his realm, similarly those who have reached such liberation are freed in mind wherever they may dwell (AN III 152). Dwelling freed in mind in this way, they are aloof from the world like a lotus that has risen above water (AN V 152). Undefiled like a lotus that has risen above water, freed like the wind that cannot be caught in a net, a liberated one is a leader of others, having gone beyond any need to be led by others (Sn 213).

Abbreviations

Abhidh-k	*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*
Abhidh-s	*Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha*
AN	*Aṅguttara-nikāya*
As	*Atthasālinī*
Cp	*Cariyāpiṭaka*
Dhp	*Dhammapada*
DN	*Dīgha-nikāya*
It	*Itivuttaka*
Khp	*Khuddakapāṭha*
Kv-a	*Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā*
Mil	*Milindapañha*
MN	*Majjhima-nikāya*
Mp	*Manorathapūraṇī*
Nett	*Nettipakaraṇa*
Paṭis	*Paṭisambhidāmagga*
Peṭ	*Peṭakopadesa*
Ps	*Papañcasūdanī*
Sn	*Sutta-nipāta*
SN	*Saṃyutta-nikāya*
Spk	*Sāratthappakāsinī*
Sv	*Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*
T	Taishō
Th	*Theragāthā*
Thī	*Therīgāthā*
Ud	*Udāna*
Ud-a	*Paramatthadīpanī*
Vibh	*Vibhaṅga*
Vin	*Vinaya*
Vism	*Visuddhimagga*

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Index:

Adhimutta 16
ahiṃsā 44
Ajita Kesakambalī..... 13
Alagaddūpama-sutta..... 15
ālokasaññā..... 59
Ānanda 26
Anaṅgana-sutta 139
Ānāpānasati-sutta. 73, 118, 157
Anattalakkhaṇa-sutta..... 137
Āneñjasappāya-sutta ... 15, 121, 152, 155
Aṅgulimāla..... 85, 107
annihilationism..... 13
Anuruddha..... 58, 69, 133
arahant..... 43, 58, 65, 85, 111, 132, 161
Araṇavibhaṅga-sutta 105
Ariyapariyesana-sutta..... 23
arrow, simile of 9, 80, 167
awakening factor 69, 73
baby, simile of..... 33, 72
Bahuvedanīya-sutta..... 110
banner, simile of..... 167
bhaṅga-ñāṇa 96
Bhayabherava-sutta..... 124
bird, simile of 25
Bodhirājakumāra-sutta 106
bolts, simile of..... 167
Brahmajāla-sutta 16, 87, 129
brahmavihāra..... 35, 114, 117, 146, 149
Brahmāyu-sutta 31
branch, simile of..... 154
bubbles, simile of 79
burden, simile of 167
Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta 34, 52
cessation..... 39, 110, 148, 153, 154
Chachakka-sutta..... 93
charcoal pit, simile of..... 25
chariot, simile of .. 45, 120, 167
child, simile of 46
companion, simile of..... 10
compassion..... 55, 115, 149
creeper, simile of..... 8
cross-bar, simile of..... 167
Cūḷa-assapura-sutta 48
Cūḷadukkhakkhandha-sutta 106
Cūḷakammavibhaṅga-sutta... 50
Cūḷasāropama-sutta..... 164
Cūḷataṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta..... 27
Cūḷavedalla-sutta..... 92, 97, 98
Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga-sutta..... 165
Dasuttara-sutta 21, 141, 165
dependent arising 20, 37, 77, 87, 89, 94, 140
desert, simile of..... 70
determinism 85
Devadaha-sutta..... 107, 120
Dhammacakkapavattana-s. 127
dhammacārī..... 103
dhammarāga..... 33
dhamm'uddhacca 65
Dhātuvibhaṅga-sutta 18, 121
disease..... 53
dispassion..... 36
dog, simile of 13, 25
drink, simile of poisonous.... 20
dukkha.....39, 47, 98, 128, 136
elephant, simile of..... 120
emotion 77
eye of the Dhamma 76

factors of awakening ... 41, 118, 151
faith 73, 76, 159
fear 31, 52
fetters 32, 46, 65, 151
fig, simile of 49
fire, simile of 19, 120
fire-sticks, simile of 79
fish, simile of 7, 9
funeral pyre, simile of 48
Girimānanda-sutta 39
Godhika 154
gold, simile of ... 49, 63, 68, 71, 120
grass, simile of 22, 79
guesthouse, simile of 79
harming 44
hindrances 48, 70
horse, simile of 167
ignorance 22, 94, 140
impermanence 37, 136
Indriyabhāvanā-sutta 112
influxes 66, 69
intention, wrong 44
irritation 50
jhāna ...33, 50, 60, 82, 109, 114, 122, 143, 149, 152, 160
jhāna, first 166
jhāna, fourth 147, 152
Jīvaka-sutta 55, 117
Kandaraka-sutta 108
Kaṅkhārevata 75
karma 46, 55, 84
kasiṇa 146, 152
Kāyagatāsati-sutta 82
king, simile of 168
Lakkhaṇa-sutta 51
lamp, simile of 20, 80, 167
leper, simile of 25, 104
lotus, simile of 22, 162, 168
loving kindness 54, 55, 115, 147, 149, 151
lute, simile of 64
Māgandiya-sutta 25
Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta 21, 96, 104
Mahāhatthipadopama-sutta 116
Mahāmaluṅkya-sutta 46
Mahāmoggallāna 27
Mahānidāna-sutta ... 86, 90, 162
Mahāparinibbāna-sutta 72
Mahāsaccaka-sutta 51, 58, 106, 129
Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta 142
Mahāsaḷāyatanika-sutta 94
Mahāsāropama-sutta 164
Mahāsīhanāda-sutta.... 117, 131
Mahāsuññata-sutta 155
Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta 6
Mahāvedalla-sutta 164
man, simile of 20, 121
Māra 28, 29, 61, 70, 154
messengers, simile of 125
moat, simile of 167
monkey, simile of 8
moon, simile of 7, 150
mountain, simile of 130
net, simile of 6, 168
Nibbāna 23, 40, 42, 110, 125, 132, 138, 161, 166
no c'assa 14
noble eightfold path 24, 41, 43, 125, 163
noble truth, second 19
noble truth, third 23
noble truths, four .. 43, 109, 127
non-existence 12
non-return 33, 46

not-self 39, 91, 138, 153, 155
nutriment 50, 72, 135
ocean, simile of 80, 167
oxen, simile of 32
painter, simile of 30
Pañcattaya-sutta 13
Paṭācārā 167
path, simile of 71
Pāṭika-sutta 147
perception of light 59
pig, simile of 58
pillar, simile of 167
Potaliya-sutta 25
prison, simile of 57
Puṇṇovāda-sutta 117
purification 41
rabbit, simile of 7
rain, simile of 79, 108
Raṭṭhapāla-sutta 10
Revata 75
right knowledge 163
river, simile of 79
roof, simile of 51
Saccaka 51
Sakka 27, 74
Sakkapañha-sutta 47, 74
Saḷāyatana-sutta 113
Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta 93, 142
Sāleyyaka-sutta 47
Salla-sutta 80
Sallekha-sutta 45
salt, simile of 85
Samaṇamaṇḍika-sutta 50
Sāmaññaphala-sutta . 13, 68, 70
samatha 35, 65, 95, 122, 133, 166
Sampasādanīya-sutta 75
Sāmugiya-sutta 165
Sandaka-sutta 13
Saṅgīti-sutta 141
Sāriputta 16, 69, 110, 115
satipaṭṭhāna 73, 135
Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta 25, 34, 52, 60, 89, 95, 133, 145
seamstress, simile of 7
self-notion 86
self-mortification 106
sensual craving 25
sensual passion 35
sensual pleasures 105
shadow, simile of 80
Sīha, general 15
Sīha, nun 30
slave of craving 11
slavery 68
sleeping 58
Soṇa 64
star, simile of 150
stream, simile of 8
stream-entry ..42, 46, 70, 74, 75
strings of a lute, simile of 64
Subhadda 72
Sudinna 66
suicide 16
sukha 100
sun, simile of 150
surgeon, simile of 9
Susīma-sutta 160
thirst for power 11
torch, simile of 25
trainer, simile of 142
tree, simile of . 8, 20, 25, 49, 80
trumpeter, simile of 150
underlying tendencies ... 33, 46, 72, 80, 84, 91
Vatthūpama-sutta 48
Verañja 15

views 23, 30, 87, 140
virāgā 36, 96, 165
visitors, simile of..... 79
warrior, simile of..... 167
water, simile of.. 36, 49, 57, 68, 71, 85, 134
weaponry, simile of..... 45
well, simile of..... 132
wheel-turning king 120
who?..... 21, 86
wind, simile of 78, 168
wood, simile of 48
worldly 84, 100, 148
Yamaka 15
yoniso manasikāra..... 73, 134
Yuganaddha-sutta 65